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# 15 | Metaphor and identity in Severan architecture: the Septizodium at Rome between 'reality' and 'fantasy'

EDMUND THOMAS

With typical perspicacity, Ewen Bowie suspected that the historian Cassius Dio (c. 164–after 230) took the famous story of the architectural conflict between the Emperor Hadrian and the architect Apollodorus much too seriously.<sup>1</sup> Behind Apollodorus' apparent criticism of the planned height of the cult statues of Venus and Rome, Bowie quickly identified a veiled compliment, in the allusion to earlier criticism of Phidias' statue in the Temple of Zeus at Olympia.<sup>2</sup> To Bowie the reason for the inclusion of this story lay in the inclination of 'the politically-minded Dio' to overvalue 'the boastful anecdotes of artists who liked it to be known that they were intimate with the emperor'.<sup>3</sup> Without denying the importance of this motive, I want in this chapter to offer another explanation. In the whole corpus of surviving Greek literature, there are few louder voices on the potential of architecture as metaphor than this Greek senator from Nicaea, who became suffect consul probably in 205 or 206, proconsul of Africa around 223, and *consul ordinarius* in 229.<sup>4</sup> His *History of Rome*, of which the last years survive only in later epitomators, shows not only a belief in the impact of supernatural forces, but also an awareness of how buildings were metaphors of earthly or celestial power. It is there that we read the explanation of the name of the Pantheon in Rome as due to its representation of the cosmos by its 'tholos-like' form;<sup>5</sup> there we find the reading, or probably misreading,<sup>6</sup> of the inscription on the base of Trajan's Column as a reflection of the equality between the column's height and the height of the hill removed by excavation;<sup>7</sup> from him we learn that the number of columns in the Temple of Quirinus mirrored the number of years in Augustus' life and that, when Augustus remarked on his deathbed that he had found Rome made of brick and left it in marble, he did not refer to the literal reality of its buildings, but metaphorically to the change in Rome's fortunes from humble village to centre of a world empire;<sup>8</sup> and throughout his history we see how major

<sup>1</sup> Bowie (1997) 8–11; Dio 69.4.2–5; translation of the full passage in Lepper and Frere (1988) 188.

<sup>2</sup> Strab. 8.3.30 (C353–4). <sup>3</sup> Bowie (1997) 11. <sup>4</sup> Millar (1964) 204–7. <sup>5</sup> Dio 53.27.

<sup>6</sup> Lepper and Frere (1988) 203–7. <sup>7</sup> Dio 68.16.2. <sup>8</sup> Dio 56.30.3–4.

temple buildings prefigured changes in secular power.<sup>9</sup> All these passages point to an overriding conviction that buildings have a major symbolic role in determining or reflecting political events. The suggestion made here is that Dio was not idiosyncratic in holding such a conviction and that he took for granted a like-minded readership in presenting such numerologies and symbolisms.<sup>10</sup> The anecdote about Hadrian and Apollodorus can, therefore, be understood not just as reflecting the boastfulness of artists in general, but as indicative of the high political stakes that were involved in the issue of imperial architectural design.

Dio has an ambiguous relationship towards the emperor Septimius Severus. To Severus he must have owed the continuation of his own political career; yet this did not stop him from expressing criticisms of this emperor's rule, even if his judgement on Severus' reign was ultimately favourable.<sup>11</sup> Where he is most outspoken is in his criticism of Severus' building activities:

he restored a very large number of old buildings and inscribed his own name on them, as if he had been the first to erect them from his own private funds; he also wasted a large amount of money repairing other buildings and building new ones, such as a colossal (ὑπερμεγέθη) temple of Bacchus and Hercules.<sup>12</sup>

Hardly more favourable is Herbert W. Benario's more recent assessment, of almost fifty years ago, which gives the impression that Severus' work amounted to little more than the restoration or repair of existing structures, although in the case of the Temple of Peace at least the work done seems to have been substantial.<sup>13</sup>

One work of Severus' reign, however, stands out: the Septizodium, which once stood at the southwest corner of the Palatine Hill in Rome and has recently been described as 'perhaps the most imposing monument to adorn the city of Rome' since Hadrian's Temple of Venus and Rome (inaugurated in 121) and 'intended to make a visible and forceful architectural statement about [Severus'] authority as a ruler'.<sup>14</sup> The present volume provides an opportune moment to reassess the cultural significance of the structure, on which two substantial studies have appeared within the last six years.<sup>15</sup> Dio, however, does not even mention it, although this may have been because he

<sup>9</sup> Dio 56.24.3 (Temple of Mars, Campus Martius). Possibly meaning the Pantheon: Ziolkowski (1994). Dio recounts similar events at 21.30 (Temple of Asclepius, Carthage); 37.35.4 (Temple of Vesta, Rome); 41.14.2 (Temple of Quirinus, Rome); 65.6.1–3 (Capitolium, Jerusalem); 79.7 (Temple of Serapis, Alexandria).

<sup>10</sup> Demandt (1982). <sup>11</sup> Millar (1964) 16 (career), 138–9 (favourable opinion).

<sup>12</sup> Dio 77.16.3; Millar (1964) 139; cf. Walker (1990) 138; Horster (2001) 28–9.

<sup>13</sup> Benario (1958) 714–18; Herodian 1.14.1–6. <sup>14</sup> Lusnia (2004) 534.

<sup>15</sup> Gorrie (2001); Lusnia (2004).

was away from Rome when it was dedicated in 203.<sup>16</sup> The date can be inferred from parts of the entablature of the lowest storey carrying the inscription: the fragment recorded by the *Einsiedeln Itinerary*, in the eighth or early ninth century, does not tie the structure to a particular year,<sup>17</sup> but the fragment on the remnants of the building that still stood in the sixteenth century is agreed by almost all writers who recorded it to have mentioned a sixth tribunician power, which must be that of Caracalla, thus dating the building to between December 202 and December 203.<sup>18</sup> One source alone, a manuscript of the Flemish epigrapher Martin Smet (1525–78), which contains notes made on a visit to Rome between 1545 and 1551, appears to point to the year 202;<sup>19</sup> but, as the editors Henzen and de Rossi saw, his drawing, which shows the letters ‘trib. pot. v’ on the left part of the entablature, is easily reconciled with the majority reading, if one assumes that the inscription continued on the next part, not shown by Smet, with the letters ‘I cos pro’.<sup>20</sup> So we return to the conclusion that the Septizodium, like the more famous arch in the Forum, was dedicated by Severus and his sons Caracalla and Geta<sup>21</sup> in 203, the year of Severus’ return to Rome from Africa and of the celebration of his Parthian triumph, postponed from 198.<sup>22</sup>

The building’s purpose is known from the later *Augustan History*. According to the unusually explicit indication of this source, Severus ‘thought of nothing else than that his work would meet those coming from Africa and, if his statue had not, in his absence, been placed in the middle of the structure by order of the urban prefect, Fabius Cilo, he is said to have wanted to make it an approach to the Palatine house, in other words into a royal atrium, on that side’.<sup>23</sup> The anecdote has been dismissed as ‘a later invention’,<sup>24</sup> but the intention that it imputes to Severus would be quite consistent with previous

<sup>16</sup> Millar (1964) 17.

<sup>17</sup> *CIL* 6.1032a, based on the *Einsiedeln Itinerary* 174, in Jordan and Hülsen (1891–1907) ii 600, Valentini and Zucchetti (1940–53) ii 166.

<sup>18</sup> *CIL* 6.1032b, based on the sixteenth-century readings of Giuliano da Sangallo, the anonymous Codex Barberini, Iacopo Mazochi, and Sebastiano Marliani, who all almost certainly saw the building remains; for Caracalla’s sixth tribunician power (10 December 202 – 9 December 203), see Cagnat (1914) 209.

<sup>19</sup> Lusnia (2004) 540, assuming the reading ‘trib. pot. v’ given only by Martin Smet (Naples, Biblioteca Nazionale, MS V.E.4) and Onofrio Panvini (MS Vat. Lat. 6035 f. 57), who clearly took his text from Smet: cf. *CIL* 6.liii and 194. On Smet, see Vocht (1954) vol. III, 316–22; Mandowsky and Mitchell (1963) 24–5.

<sup>20</sup> *CIL* 6, part 1, p. 194.

<sup>21</sup> *CIL* 6.1032b, where the words ‘fortissimus nobilissimusque’ were added over the titles of Geta, following his murder in December 211 and subsequent *damnatio memoriae*; cf. Birley (1988) 189.

<sup>22</sup> Dio 76.1.3; Jordan and Hülsen (1871–1907) vol. II, 338; cf. Dombart (1922) 14.

<sup>23</sup> *HA, Sev.* 24.3. <sup>24</sup> Gorrie (2001) 657.



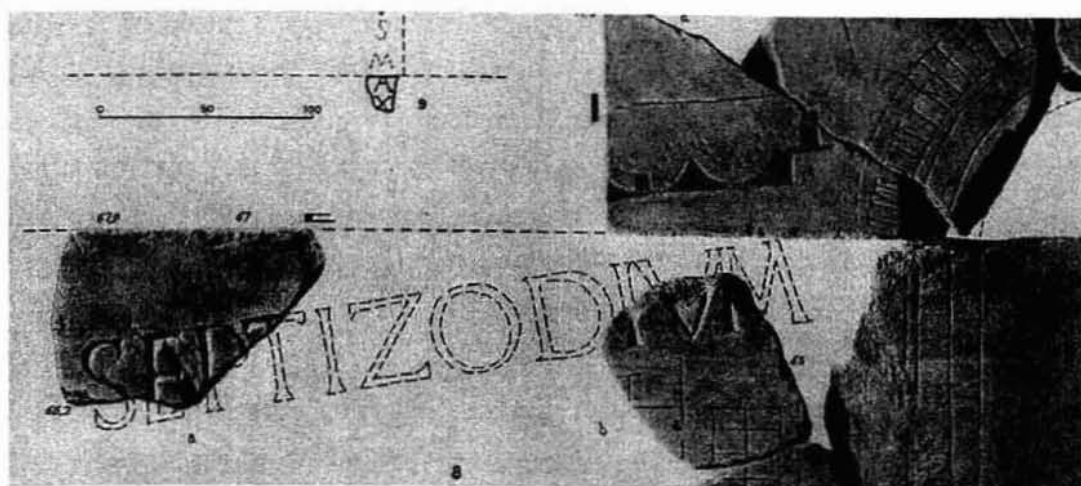
15.1 Reconstruction of the area around the Septizodium in Rome. From *Model of Ancient Rome* by Paul Bigot, Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire, Brussels.

emperors' building activities on and around the Palatine Hill. Peter Wiseman has shown how the structure's function as entrance to the imperial palace should be seen as part of a succession of alternative entrances to the emperor's house using all four corners of the hill, each of which stressed its relation to different areas of the city: first, the approach to Augustus' house from the river port on the west; then, Gaius' approach from the Julian monuments of the Roman Forum to the north; then, Nero's approach from the Esquiline and his Golden House to the east, with his Colossus standing at the entrance; and now Severus' approach from the southern corner, where the bulky structures of Domitian's palace and his own extensions to it on that side loomed large to visitors approaching from the Via Appia (fig. 15.1).<sup>25</sup> The principal source for the building's form and location, fragments 7a and 7b of the Severan Marble Plan of Rome, the *Forma Urbis* (fig. 15.2: see Trimble fig., below), which show the south end of the building, appears to corroborate this view, emphasising how the Septizodium stood as a spectacular façade seen from the Porta Capena (fig. 15.3).<sup>26</sup> This is where the route from the Via Appia leads, rather than the otherwise seductive arch at the east end of the Circus Maximus. The new Septizodium perhaps formed only part of a substantial new wing of the imperial palace on the

<sup>25</sup> Wiseman (1987) 411–13.

<sup>26</sup> Carettoni (1960) 66–7, pl. 17; cf. *Mirabilia* 8, in Valentini and Zucchetti (1940–53) vol. III, 24–5 (*arcus Stillans ante Septem Solium*).





15.2 *Forma Urbis Romae*, frs. 7a, 7b, 8a, and 8b, showing part of the Septizodium.

Palatine, at its southern corner, raised on an enormous artificial platform, the substructures of which still today dominate the view of the Palatine from the Circus Maximus.<sup>27</sup>

On the other hand, the Marble Plan does not entirely explain the statement about the intended use of the building. Fr. 7a and the left end of fr. 7b, show a dotted line parallel to the back wall of the structure, which represents a colonnade, and, in front of it, a continuous, straight line, which has been recognised as representing the edge of a large water basin, placed at the front of the structure.<sup>28</sup> Thus the building would have served as a fountain and can be identified as the 'nymphaeum of ambitious construction' attributed by Ammianus Marcellinus to Marcus Aurelius, presumably because of the titles of Caracalla on the inscription.<sup>29</sup> A small square in front of a concave niche in the back wall of the structure, which, by the scale of the Marble Plan, must have been around three metres on each side, has been interpreted as the base of the statue of Severus indicated by the *Historia Augusta*.<sup>30</sup> The latter may have been of substantial size, perhaps even a colossus, as some scholars have believed.<sup>31</sup> However, in the position indicated on the plan, directly in front of the water basin, the presence or absence of the statue would have made little difference to its potential as an entrance.

The structure's alleged purpose, to greet visitors to Rome from Africa, can be easily explained by Severus' own well-known African origins; on

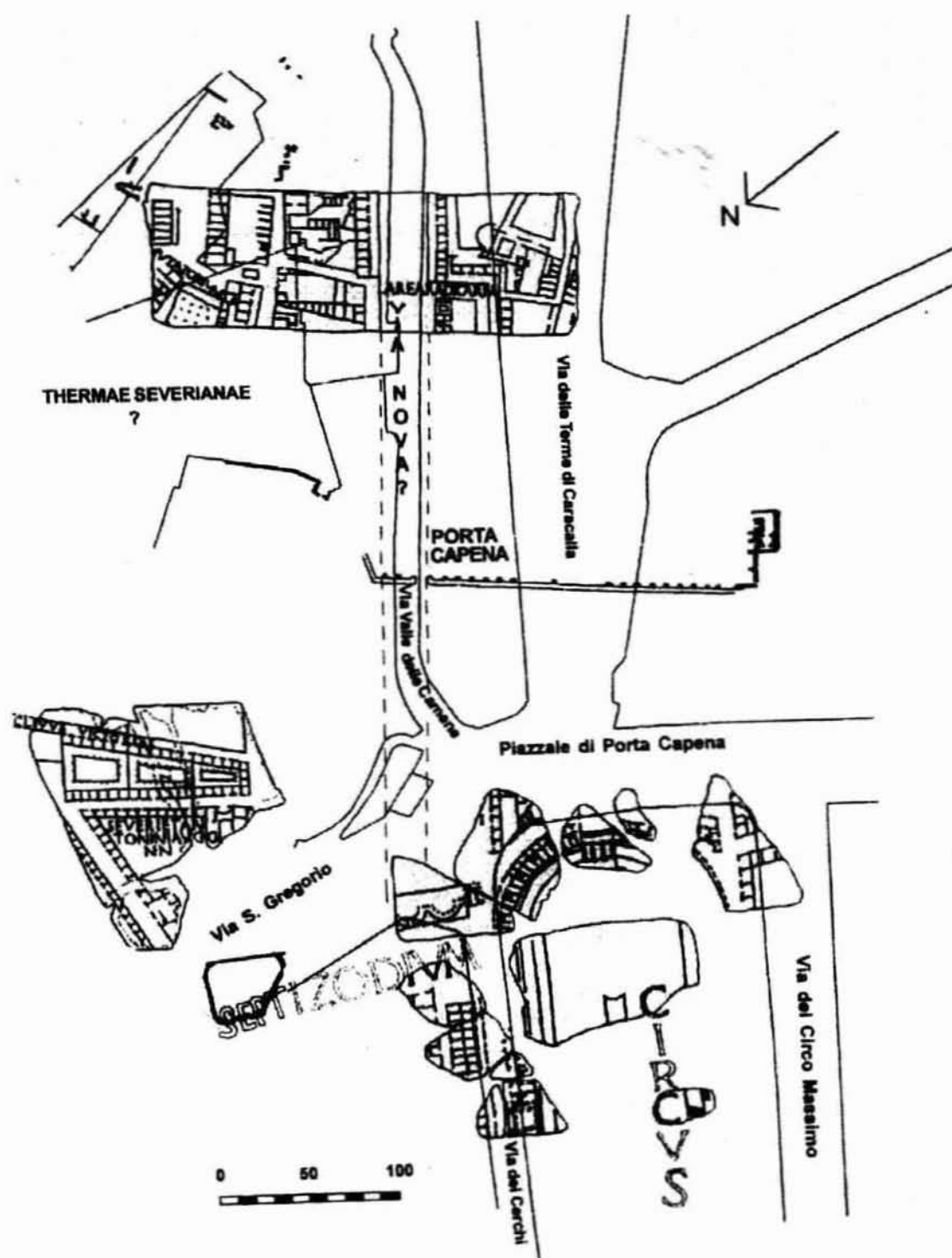
<sup>27</sup> Massaccesi (1939); Lugli (1946) 517; Iacopi, Tomei, and Meogrossi (1986).

<sup>28</sup> Carettoni et al. (1960) 66–7 pl. 17. Petersen (1910) 67; Dombart (1922) 3–10, with frontispiece and figs. 1–5.

<sup>29</sup> Amm. Marc. 15.7.3; cf. Master Gregorius, *De mirabilibus Urbis Romae* 19 in Valentini and Zucchetti (1940–53) vol. III, 158.

<sup>30</sup> Iacopi and Tedone (1990) 153; Pisani Sartorio (1999) 268.

<sup>31</sup> Platner and Ashby (1929) 474.



15.3 Plan of the area around the Porta Capena in antiquity showing fragments of the *Forma Urbis*, superimposed on the modern street plan. The Via Appia at this point, marked by the dashed line, may have taken the name Via Nova.

one account, he 'retained a trace of an African accent into old age'.<sup>32</sup> It also makes topographical sense. It is widely agreed by those studying the Septizodium that it was a striking feature just inside the Porta Capena for

<sup>32</sup> HA, Sev. 19.9, translated by Birley (1988) 35; cf. Millar (1964) 184 n. 5.

anyone arriving there from the Via Appia, and this would have included those landing from Africa at the ports along Italy's western coast, such as Antium, Tarracina, or Misenum. Indeed, even the Via Ostiensis from Ostia and Portus, which since the late republic had been the main points of disembarkation from Africa,<sup>33</sup> must have reached Rome at the Porta Capena, as it was included among the 'seven ways' (*Septem Viae*) that met at this point, giving rise to a medieval name for the locality in front of the Septizodium (fig. 15.3).<sup>34</sup>

This statement about the building in the *Historia Augusta* draws attention to what one might today call its 'regionalist' purpose. The issue of regional identity has received particular attention in recent architectural theory, where the term 'critical regionalism' has been adopted as a bottom-up approach to design, which recognises the value of the identity of a social and cultural situation.<sup>35</sup> Alexander Tzonis and Liane Lefaivre intend the concept as both an invigorating tool for modern design and a long-term historical phenomenon, which they trace back to the alleged use of the Greek orders to represent the identity of a group and regard as grounded in Vitruvius' materialist claims for architecture as something determined by natural climatic conditions and human rationality.<sup>36</sup> While modern scholars give little credence to Vitruvius' assertions, they still highlight the significance of regional variation.<sup>37</sup> For Tzonis and Lefaivre, the task of critical regionalism is to rethink architecture through the concept of region, instead of 'mindlessly adopting the narcissistic dogmas in the name of universality'.<sup>38</sup> Others highlight the role of metaphor in communicating such new architectural meanings.<sup>39</sup> In short, the critical regionalist approach to design and to the architecture of identity recognises the value of the singular and circumscribes projects within the physical, social, and cultural constraints of the particular. It aims at sustaining diversity, while also benefiting from universality.

Although the rhetoric of such theorising may be peculiar to the modern era, a consideration of the relation between architecture and identity can also be relevant to the study of the architecture of the distant past. It is symptomatic of traditional understandings of Roman architecture that in their historical survey of 'critical regionalism' Tzonis and Lefaivre go straight from Vitruvius to the tenth-century *Casa dei Crescenzi*, omitting the entire

<sup>33</sup> Meiggs (1973) 29.

<sup>34</sup> *Einsiedeln Itinerary* 11.4, in Valentini and Zucchetti (1940–53) vol. II, 174 (*inde per porticum usque ad formam per VII vias*).

<sup>35</sup> Tzonis and Lefaivre (2003).

<sup>36</sup> Vit. *De arch.* 1.4; 4.2.3–5.

<sup>37</sup> Barletta (2001) 154.

<sup>38</sup> Tzonis and Lefaivre (2003) 20.

<sup>39</sup> Abel (2000) 97–105.



Roman imperial period.<sup>40</sup> Indeed, it has been too easy to see the architecture of the Roman empire as reflecting a universalism of design, mitigated only by the existence of different workshops and regional traditions.<sup>41</sup> The Roman empire was a place of cultural diversity and competing regional identities. But those regional identities were not only the accidental expressions of local building traditions; they could also correspond to the aims and objectives of individual patrons, including the emperors themselves, which operated within a wider context of regionalist loyalties and aspirations.<sup>42</sup> The older view that Severus had a distinctively 'African' political agenda has of course been challenged,<sup>43</sup> and it is unlikely that any gestures he made in this direction were at the expense of Roman republican traditions, as some have claimed.<sup>44</sup> However, his architectural activities show a notably Punic agenda, as is clear from Dio's reference to Severus' 'huge temple' dedicated to Bacchus and Hercules:<sup>45</sup> this pairing of Bacchus (Liber) and Hercules must correspond to the Punic gods Melqart and Shadraba,<sup>46</sup> and the temple criticised by Dio could well have been the colossal temple in the Severan Forum at Lepcis Magna, of which these divinities were the patrons.<sup>47</sup> Such a dedication would certainly have been reflected in the relief decoration of the two apses of the adjacent basilica: the south shows the Labours of Hercules (fig. 15.4), and the north is devoted to Dionysus and related themes (fig. 15.5).<sup>48</sup> In view of such evidence, the explicit statement of the *Augustan History* demands that the Septizodium should also be seen in the light of such concerns.

To return to the Septizodium, its appearance is known above all by a series of depictions made in the sixteenth century before its final demolition by order of Pope Sixtus V in 1588.<sup>49</sup> By then, what remained was a mere shadow of its former greatness, but the topographical evidence suggests that it had covered a wide area. The inscription recorded by the Einsiedeln Itinerary shows that already then the monument was broken into different parts, sufficiently far away from each other for the writer not to have related their

<sup>40</sup> Tzonis and Lefaivre (2003) 12. <sup>41</sup> E.g. Ward-Perkins (1981); MacDonald (1986).

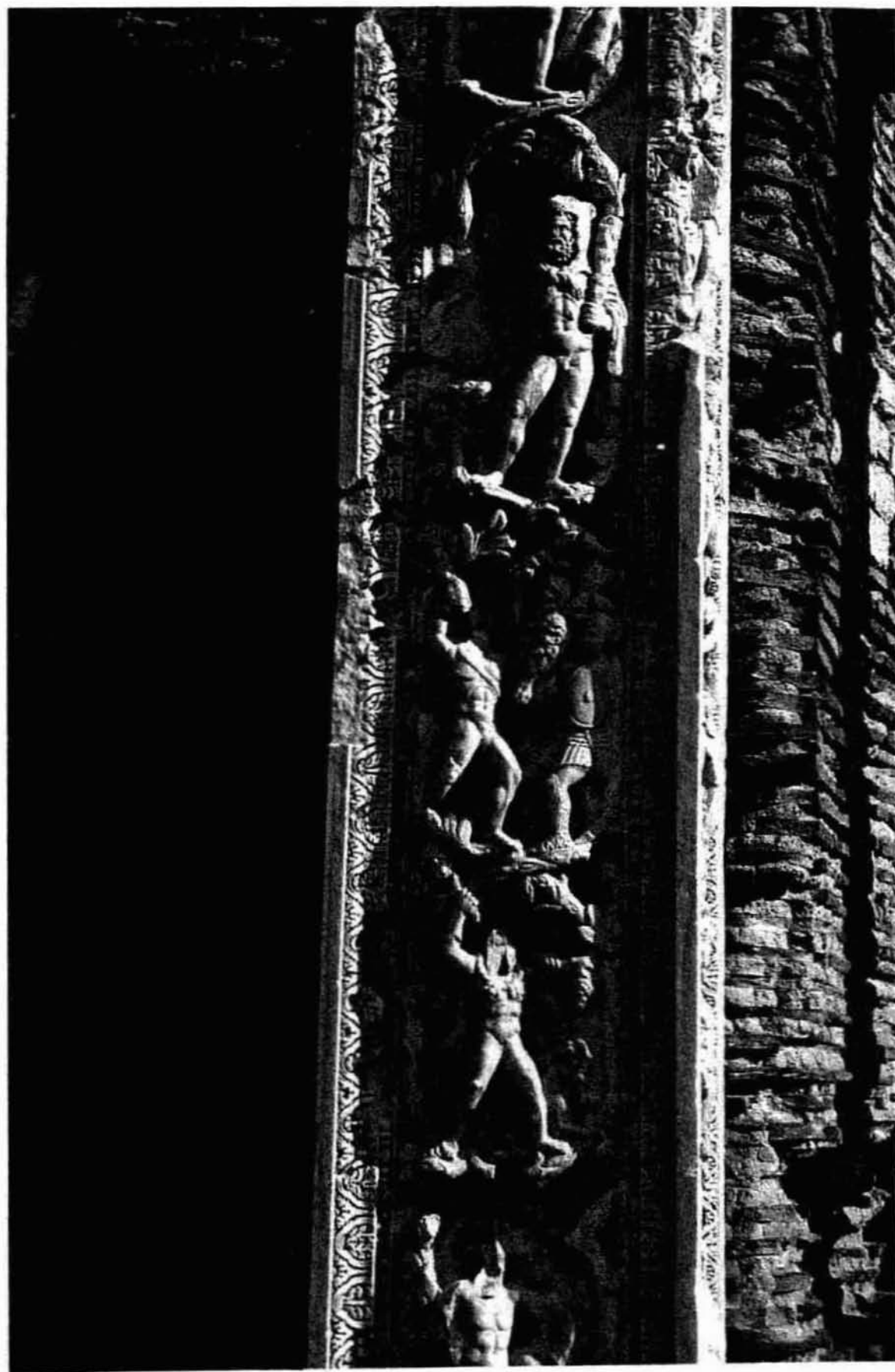
<sup>42</sup> For example, Rives (1995b) 169–72. <sup>43</sup> Barnes (1967). <sup>44</sup> Stambaugh (1988) 81.

<sup>45</sup> Dio 77.16.3 (n. 12 above). <sup>46</sup> IRT 294; Rives (1995) 129; Brody (1998) 33–7.

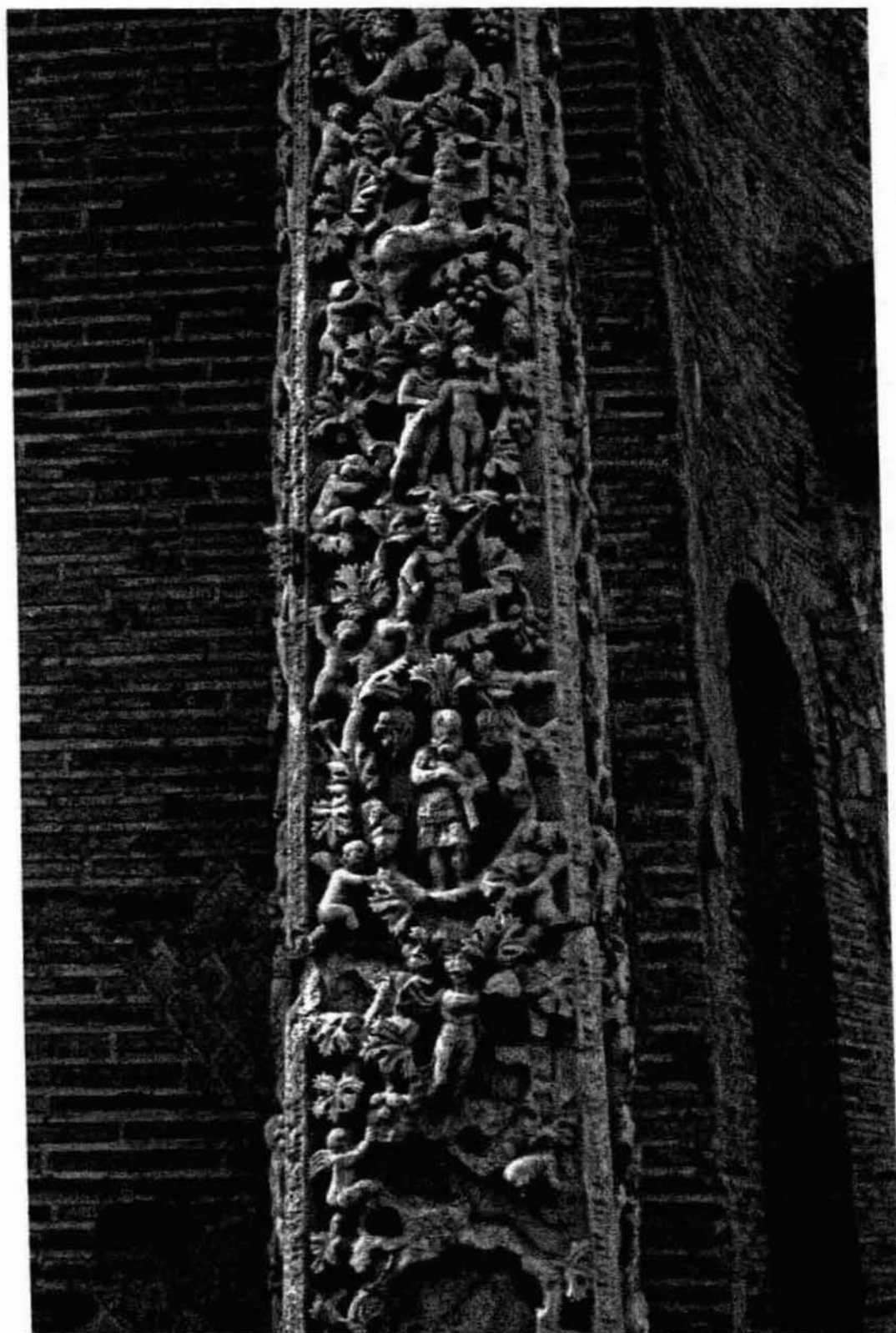
<sup>47</sup> IRT 289; Hasebroek (1921) 150, for chronological reasons, followed by Birley (1988) 34, 151 and Bianchi Bandinelli (1966) 92. Ward-Perkins (1993) 52–4, however, and Di Vita, Di Vita-Evrard, and Bacchielli (1999) 136 suggest that the dedication was to the 'Concordia Augustorum'.

<sup>48</sup> Ward-Perkins (1993) 64 fig. 30, fig. 35 (c) opposite p. 67; Di Vita, Di Vita-Evrard, and Bacchielli (1999) 132. For the building, see Wilson, in this volume.

<sup>49</sup> Lanciani (1902–12) vol. II, 63; vol. IV, 150–2; Antinori (1989) 55. The date is inferred from documents of the following year: Stevenson (1888) 275.



15.4 Detail of pilaster with relief decoration depicting Hercules, from the south apse of the Severan basilica at Lepcis Magna, AD c. 209–16.



15.5 Detail of pilaster with relief decoration depicting Dionysus, from the north apse of the Severan basilica at Leptis Magna.

inscriptions;<sup>50</sup> by 975, the name had metamorphosed from 'Septizodium' or 'Septizonium' into 'Septem solia', of which two separate parts, fragments of the former building, were distinguished, the *Septem solia maior* and *Septem solia minor*, which had each been converted into a fortress.<sup>51</sup> The church of S. Lucia in *Septisoliis* or *iuxta Septa Solis*, attested by the eighth century, and that of S. Leone *de Septem Soliis*, recorded in 1067, when it was given to the monks of S. Gregorio, must each have occupied substantial parts of the former Septizodium that are no longer visible in the sixteenth-century drawings.<sup>52</sup> In 1084 the remains were damaged by the Emperor Henry IV's attack on Pope Gregory VII.<sup>53</sup> Leased out by the abbot of S. Gregorio to Cencio Frangipane in 1145 and converted into a fortress of that family, it fared little better: the most imposing part was destroyed in 1257 during baronial struggles.<sup>54</sup> Petrarch referred to the building as simply *Sedem Solis*, 'seat of the sun', although his image of Rome resulted more from his historical imagination than 'the few crumbling objects themselves', which became 'little more than an excuse to demonstrate his cleverness'.<sup>55</sup> For others, it was the *Septifolium* or even the 'School of Virgil', the latter, first recorded in 1450, because medieval scholars identified the element of 'seven' in the building as the sum of the *trivium* and *quadrivium* of the liberal arts.<sup>56</sup> All that was left in 1521 was the *Septem Solia Minor*, which stood within a vineyard granted by the monks of S. Gregorio to Girolamo Maffei; it was this lesser structure that was depicted by artists such as Martin van Heemskerck (fig. 15.6) during his visit to Rome in 1532–5.<sup>57</sup>

In all these vicissitudes and shifts of name, what remains constant is the number seven, and for a monument erected by the Emperor Septimius Severus, of the gens Septimia, the presence of this number seems somehow inevitable if this building is to be understood as an expression of his identity, all the more so if the seventy-six columns of the Temple of Quirinus could be held to indicate Augustus' age.<sup>58</sup> Not only, Dio recalls, did the festival of his *decennalia* last seven days, but the number of animals killed was likewise

<sup>50</sup> Stevenson (1888) 271. <sup>51</sup> *Annales Camaldulenses* I, app. 96–7, cited by Stevenson (1888) 292.

<sup>52</sup> Benedetto Canonico, *Liber Politicus* in Valentini and Zucchetti (1940–53) vol. III, 309; Hülsen (1927) 297–8, 305; Pisani Sartorio (1999).

<sup>53</sup> Pietro Guglielmo, continuation of the *Liber Pontificalis*, in Valentini and Zucchetti (1940–53) vol. II, 333; Pisani Sartorio (1999) 269.

<sup>54</sup> Stevenson (1888) 292–8; Bartoli (1909).

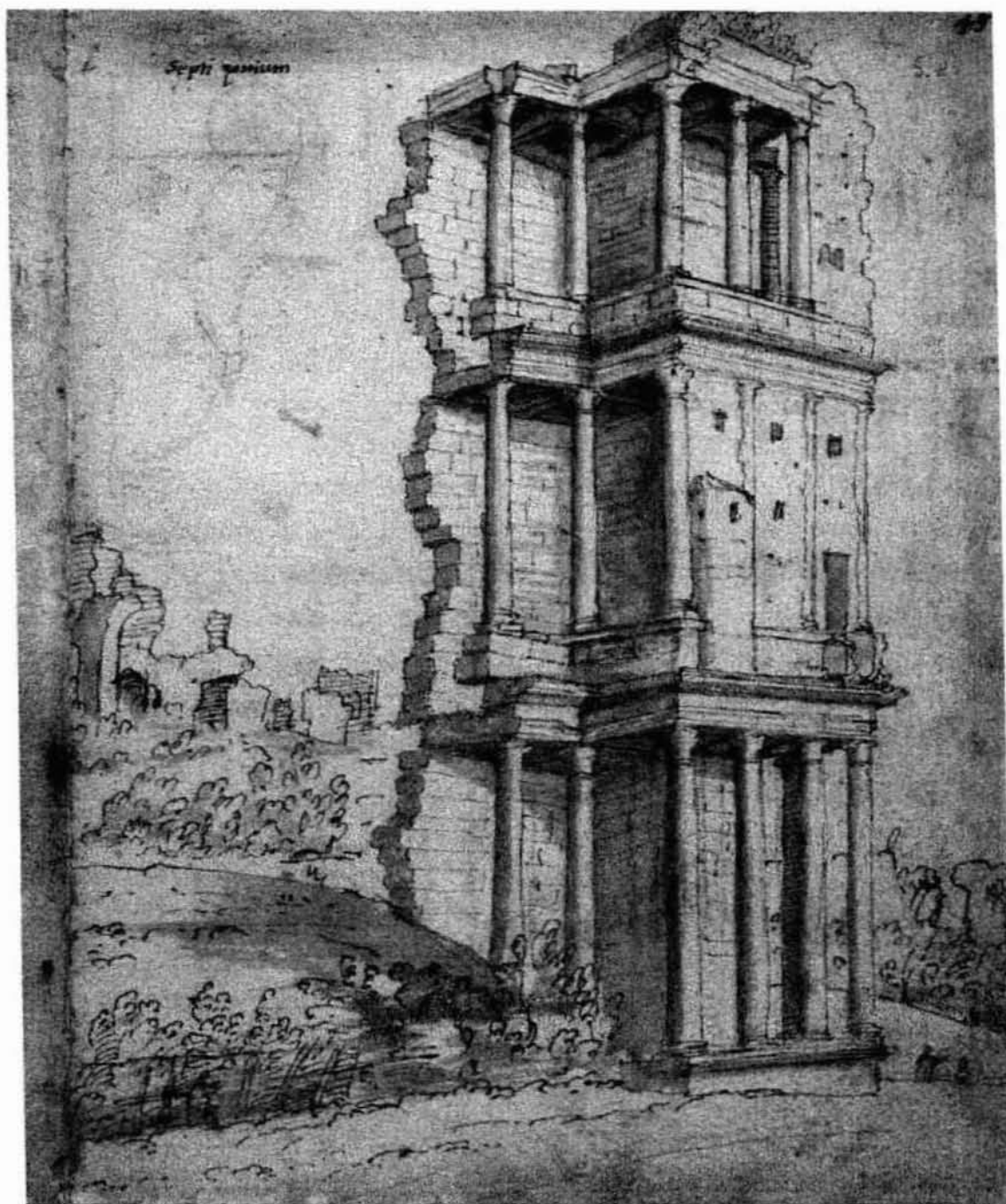
<sup>55</sup> Petrarch, *Familiar Letters*, 6.2.13; quotations from Barkan (1999) 24 and n. 31.

<sup>56</sup> Stevenson (1888) 291; Pisani Sartorio (1999) 271.

<sup>57</sup> Berlin, *Kepferstichkabinett*, *Sammelband Heemskerck* II, f. 85r = Verbogen (1982) no. 21 (with further bibliography).

<sup>58</sup> Dio 56.30.3 (above, p. 323).





15.6 'The Septizonium and Domus Severiana at Rome'. View of the ruins from the south. Drawing, pen and wash, by Maarten van Heemskerck, n.d., 19.8 cm × 14.8 cm. Kupferstichkabinett, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, 79 D 2 a, fol. 85 recto.

'seven times a hundred', a more than epic 'feast' of seven hecatombs.<sup>59</sup> It is to be expected, therefore, that a monument completed soon afterwards and so plainly associated with the number seven should declare that association loudly and unambiguously. But how exactly the number seven appeared in the physical form of the building is today unclear. Heemskerck's drawing of the surviving *Septem Solia Minor* shows a three-storey structure decorated

<sup>59</sup> Dio 76.1.3; cf. HA, Max. 11.4.



with freestanding columns, which appears to stand as an independent unit, like a tower; a contemporary drawing by Francisco d'Ollanda (fig. 15.7) presents a similar picture, while clarifying that a further structure stood behind the main visible façade. The latter even presents the ruin as a self-contained unit, entirely ignoring the question of how the original building had continued. Some artists found the magical quality of the ruins sufficiently captivating: in the earliest datable drawing, attributed to Baldassare Peruzzi, the standing remains are freely transformed into a stage-set for the enchantments of a ghost-like Orpheus (fig. 15.8).<sup>60</sup>

From these drawings, it appears that the two parts of the surviving monument were joined by a right angle, which has suggested to most scholars that what remained was from the end of the building. On this basis, combined with the evidence of the Marble Plan, the Septizodium has appeared in reconstructions of Rome from Hülsen and Lanciani onwards<sup>61</sup> as a stage-like structure consisting of three semicircular bays between two rectilinear wings (figs. 15.9–15.11).<sup>62</sup> That image seemed to be confirmed by the results of excavations in two trenches dug in 1985–8, which appeared to correspond to both Heemskerck's drawing (fig. 15.6) and the Marble Plan (fig. 15.2 = Trimble fig. 16).<sup>63</sup> In fact, in each case, the correspondence is far from conclusive: in the former case, there is no direct archaeological evidence for the structure shown by Heemskerck, as a careful look at the Italian archaeologists' plan indicates;<sup>64</sup> and in the latter case there is even a divergence between the small square structure shown on the Marble Plan and the 'foundation of sorts' found in the excavation;<sup>65</sup> moreover, the accepted reconstruction of the building differs from the structure shown on the *Forma Urbis* in having fewer columns at its south corner.<sup>66</sup> Nonetheless, such a reconstruction is accepted by all the most recent discussions of the monument.<sup>67</sup> Lusnia has suggested several precedents for this form, none of which, however, provides an exact analogy to it, not even from among the fountain buildings in Asia Minor at Miletus, Aspendos, Perge, and Side, in the last of which she sees 'a near replica of the Septizodium'.<sup>68</sup> Nor does she offer any explanation for the formal similarity between the architecture of Ionia and Pamphylia and that of Rome. In fact, as far as can be ascertained from the section shown

<sup>60</sup> Verbogen (1982) 127–31. <sup>61</sup> Lanciani (1893–1901) pl. 35.

<sup>62</sup> E.g. Dombart (1922) frontispiece; Richardson (1992) 280 fig. 63; also in P. Bigot's model, *Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire*, Brussels.

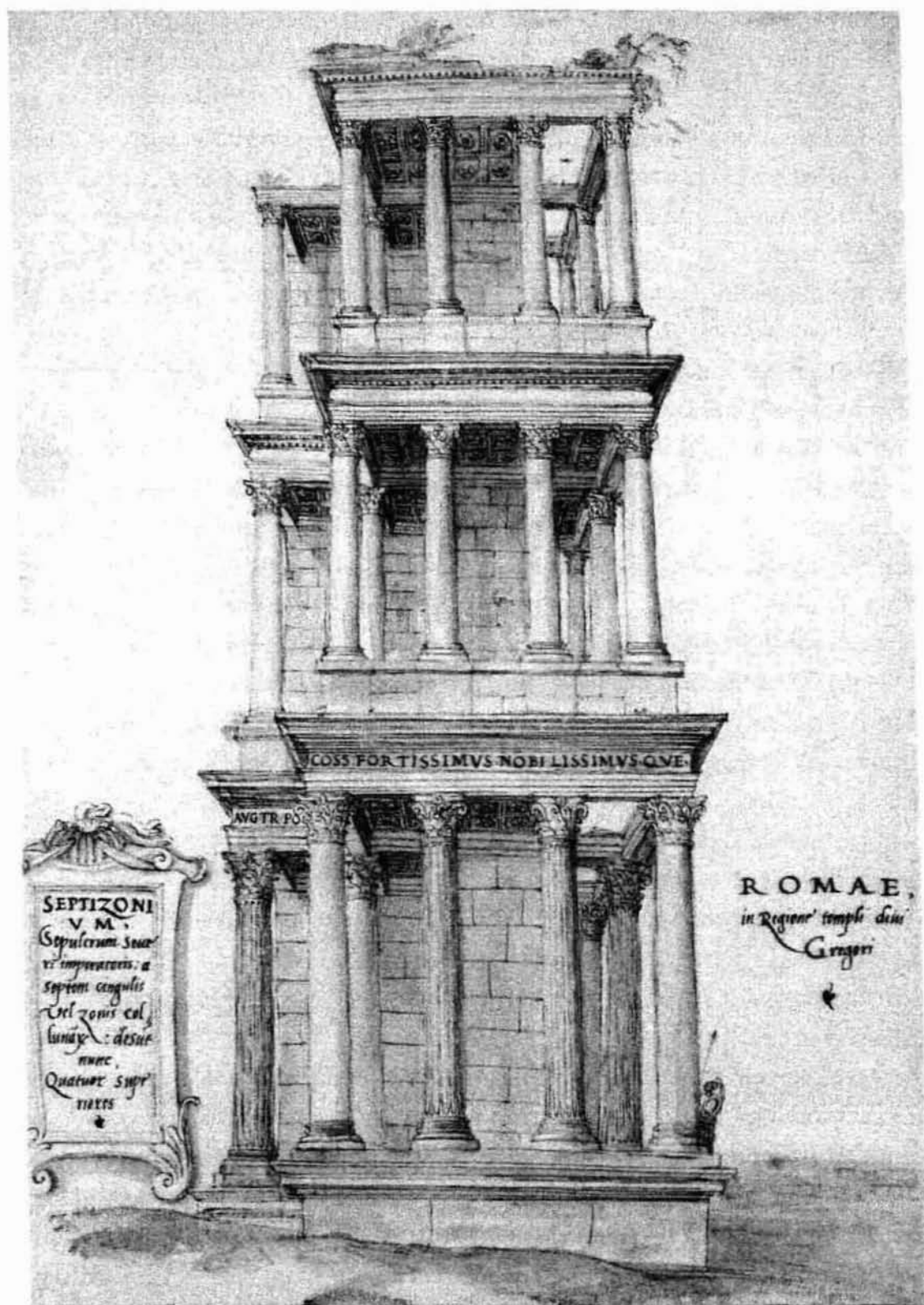
<sup>63</sup> Iacopi, Tomei, and Meogrossi (1986); Chini and Manciola (1987–8); Iacopi and Tedone (1990).

<sup>64</sup> Iacopi and Tedone (1993) 6 fig. 5; 9 fig. 8. <sup>65</sup> Ibid. 7 fig. 6; 9 fig. 8.

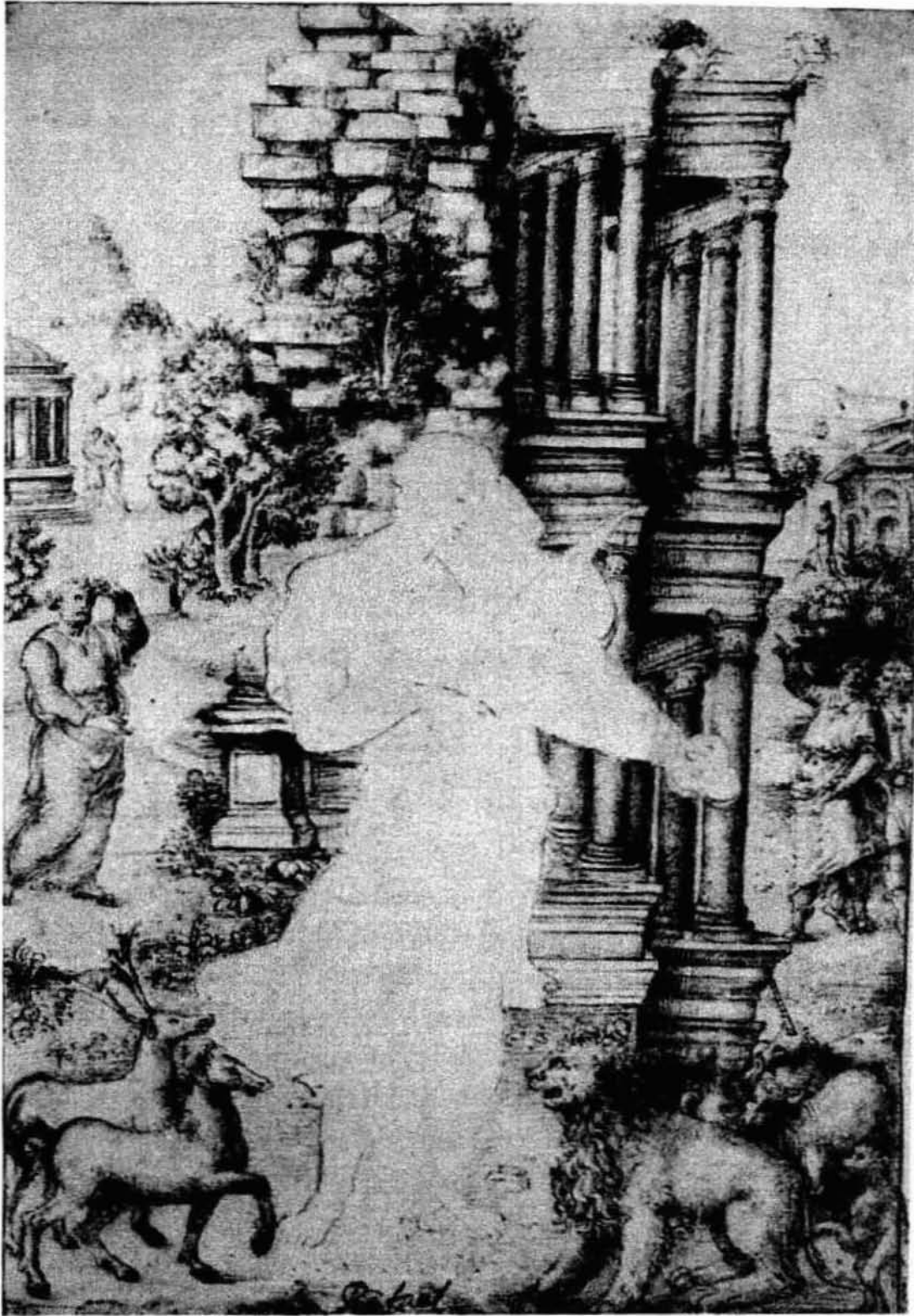
<sup>66</sup> Chini and Manciola (1986) 351 and 348 fig. 44; Gorrie (2001) 660.

<sup>67</sup> Iacopi and Tedone (1990) 151 fig. 9; Steinby (1993–9) vol. iv, 483 fig. 124; Gorrie (2001) 654; Lusnia (2004) 521.

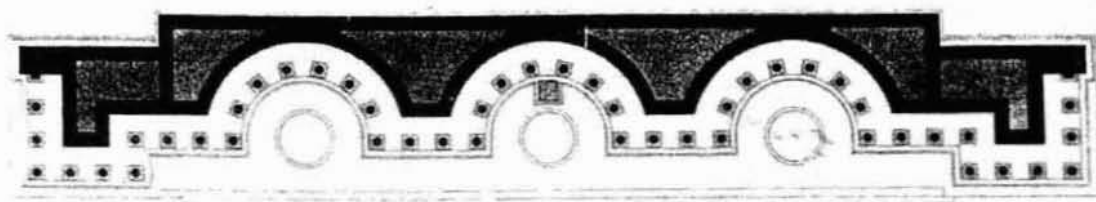
<sup>68</sup> Lusnia (2004) 532.



15.7 'The Septizodium at Rome'. View from the south by Francisco d'Ollanda.



15.8 Publicity leaflet for the Karl E. Maison Gallery in Berlin, showing a drawing of Septizodium, now lost, attributed to Baldassare Peruzzi.



15.9 Reconstructed plan of the Septizodium in Rome. Hülsen.



15.10 Reconstructed elevation of the Septizodium in Rome. Hülsen.

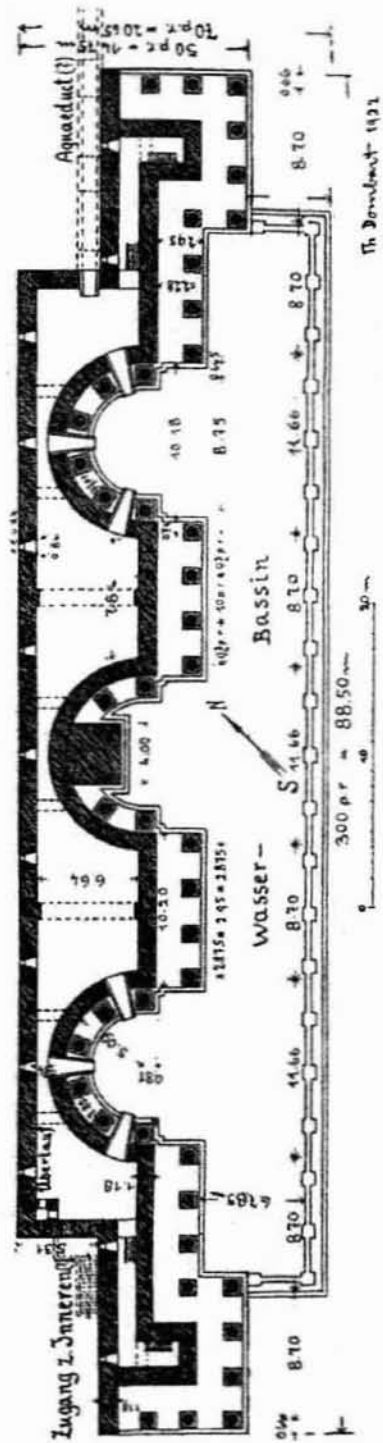
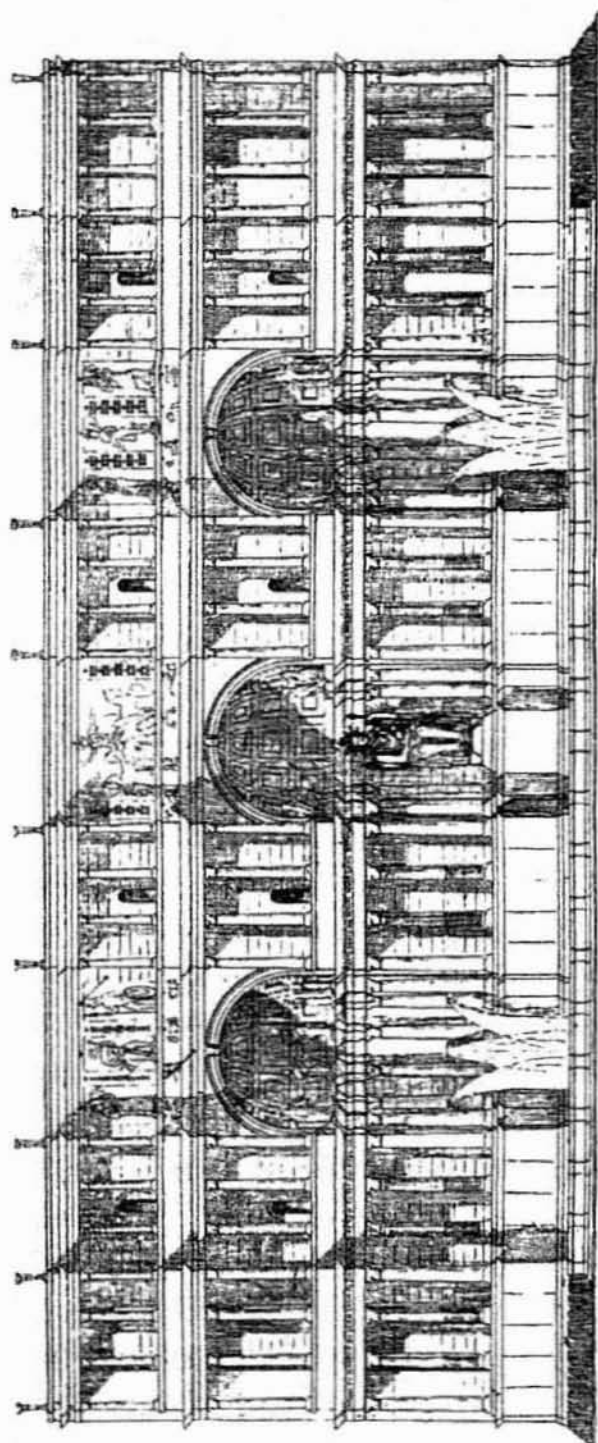
on the Marble Plan, the Septizodium would have more closely mirrored in its form a theatre stage building with three receding semicircular bays, like the well-preserved example at Sabratha (fig. 15.12) and that at Lepcis Magna in the province of Africa.<sup>69</sup> Even here the parallel is not exact, since the theatres have projecting, rectilinear pavilions with doors (*valvae*, in the terminology of Vitruvius)<sup>70</sup> inserted within the semicircles. However, *valvae* apart, the formal composition is the same, reflecting a form of *scaenae frons* that is rarely attested outside Africa,<sup>71</sup> consisting of three semicircular niches and sharply differing from more usual practice elsewhere, for example at Rome in the Theatre of Pompey, where the central niche is rectangular, and at Mérida, with a central semicircle between two rectangular niches.<sup>72</sup> The parallel may help to explain the regionalist accent of the *Historia Augusta*,

<sup>69</sup> Caputo (1959) 29–32 pl. 61, and (1987) vol. II, pl. VII. <sup>70</sup> Vit. *De arch.* 5.6.3.

<sup>71</sup> For Asia Minor, contrast the plans in de Bernardi Ferrero (1966–74) vol. IV, pls. IV–VI; in Italy the only parallel is the theatre at Vicenza, based on Palladio's plan, in which the central niche is wider than the side niches: Courtois (1989) 258 fig. 256; Zorzi (1959) 95 and fig. 224.

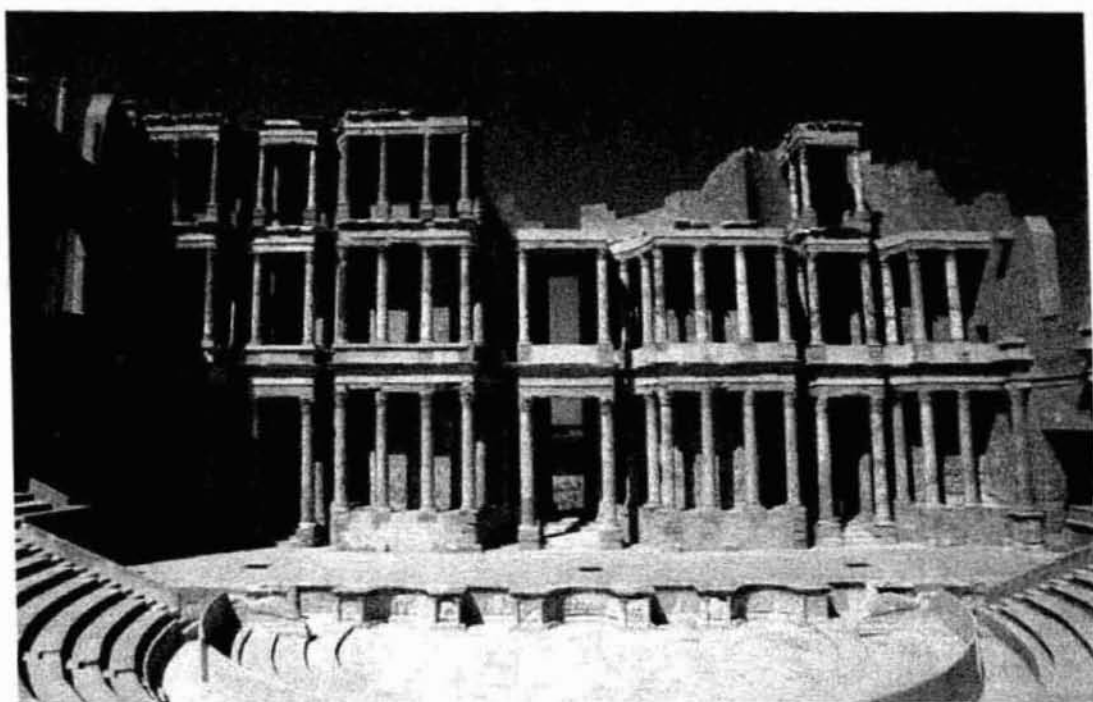
<sup>72</sup> Theatre of Pompey: Carettoni et al. (1960) 104–6 pl. XXXII; Mérida: Blanco Freijeiro (1976) 210 fig. 4.





#### 15.11 Reconstructed plan and elevation of the Septizodium in Rome. Dombart.





15.12 Stage-building of the Roman theatre at Sabratha, AD c. 190.

which implies that the appearance of the Septizodium might have been particularly recognisable to those visiting from Africa.

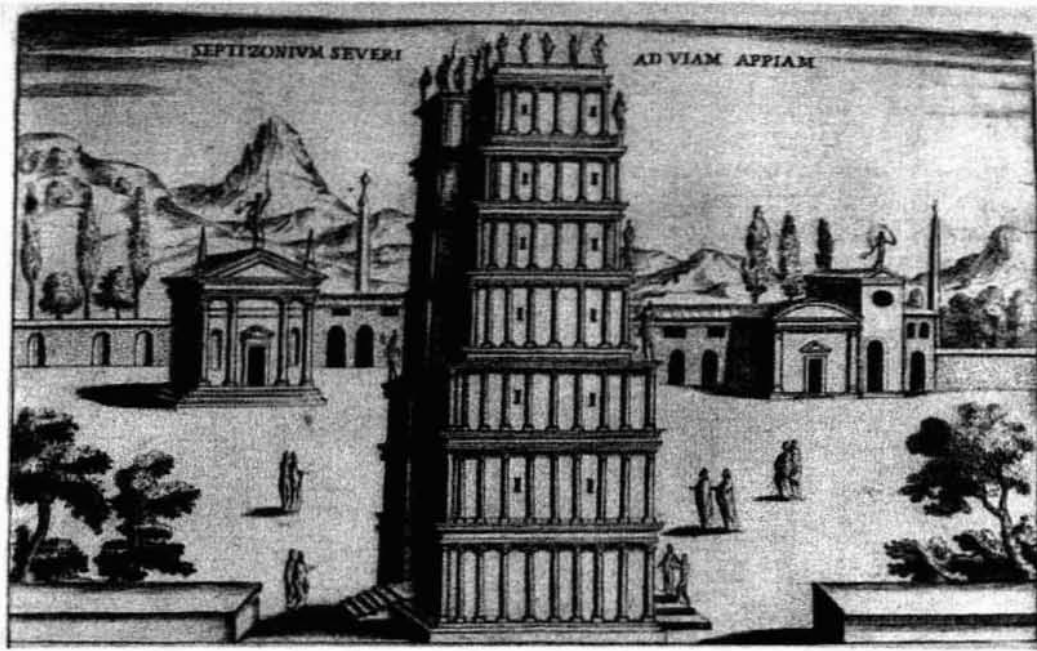
Nevertheless, scholars have been at pains to see the significance of the number seven. Since Vincenzo Scamozzi,<sup>73</sup> the prevailing assumption has been that the building must have been subdivided in such a way as to make the name 'place of the seven zones' easily intelligible. Giacomo Lauro envisaged a seven-storey tower of Babel (fig. 15.13), and in the nineteenth century the answer of Luigi Canina, never one to balk at audacious architectural solutions, was to reconstruct a monstrous tower of seven stories (fig. 15.14a, b, and c), a marvellous concept, which, however, hardly deserves credibility.<sup>74</sup> The lack of a satisfactory resolution of this problem has led some to reject altogether the idea that the number seven related to the building's architectural form.<sup>75</sup> The latest view instead imagines a row of seven water spouts, as in the representation of a fountain building on a contemporary medallion from Hadrianopolis in Thrace (fig. 15.15), which, it is suggested, would have been crowned by images of planetary divinities.<sup>76</sup> Although this

<sup>73</sup> Scamozzi (1583); Hülsen (1886) 13–15.

<sup>74</sup> Lauro (1612) pl. [117 (unnumbered)]; Canina (1848–56) vol. III, 130–3; vol. IV, 266–8.

<sup>75</sup> Aupert (1974) 118; Pisani Sartorio (1999) 271, who distinguishes in this respect between a *Septizodium* and a *Septizonium*; Lusnia (2004) 524.

<sup>76</sup> Lusnia (2004) 532 fig. 14. For the building's astronomical connections see further Petsalis-Diomidis, Ch. 13 above.

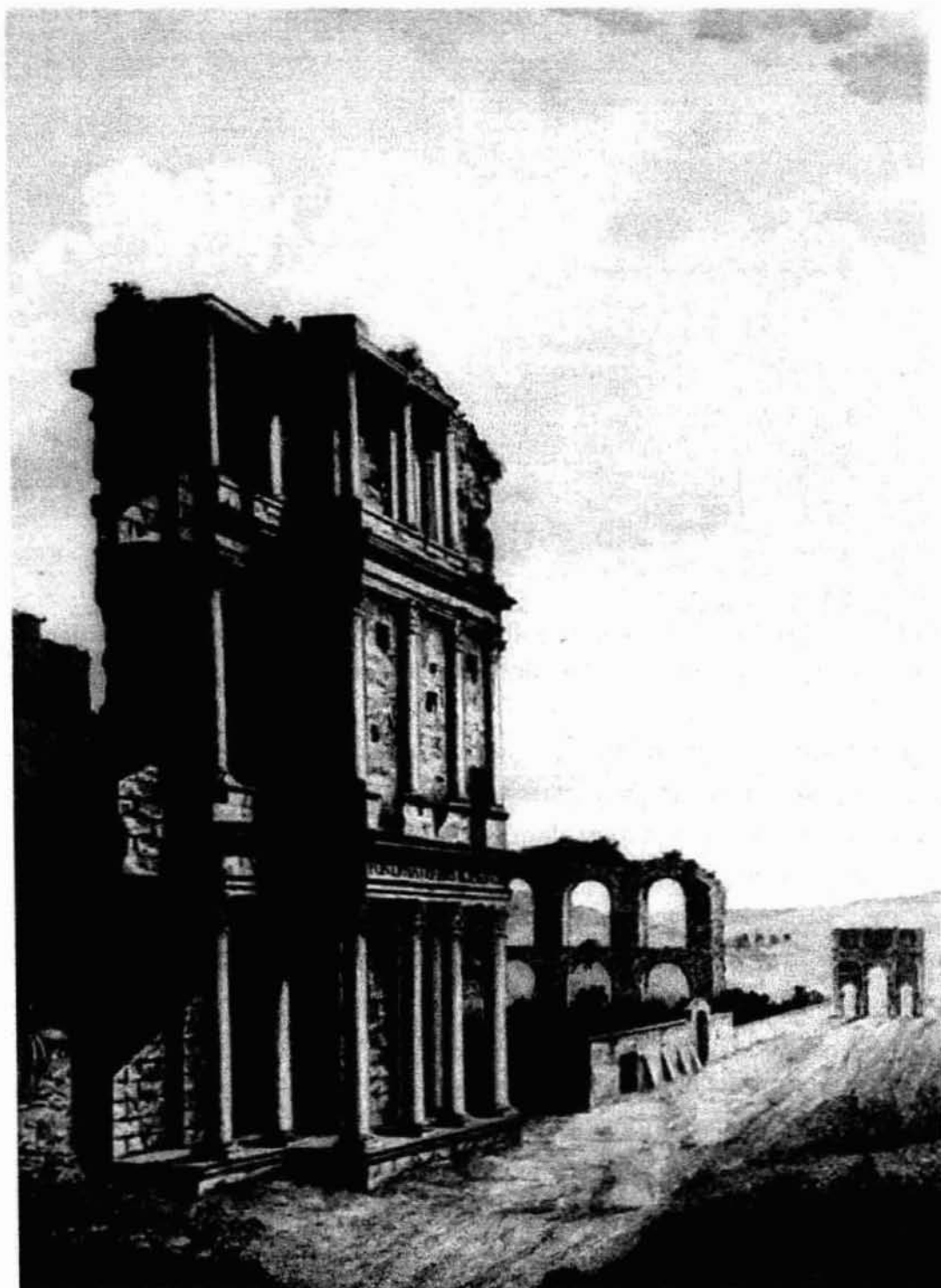


15.13 'The Septizonium of Severus on the Via Appia'. Reconstructed front elevation in an engraving by Giacomo Lauro, *Splendor Urbis Antiquae* (1612).

is a tempting suggestion, the reconstruction of sculptural images on top of water spouts seems hard to relate to the coin, and, more significantly, the explanation, which fails to explain the seven *zonae* (ζωδία), seems insufficient for the whole structure to have been called *Septizodium*. In the only two securely attested archaeological examples of such a structure, at Cincari and Lambaesis in North Africa (see below), the presence of seven statue-niches provides a more compelling reason for the name.

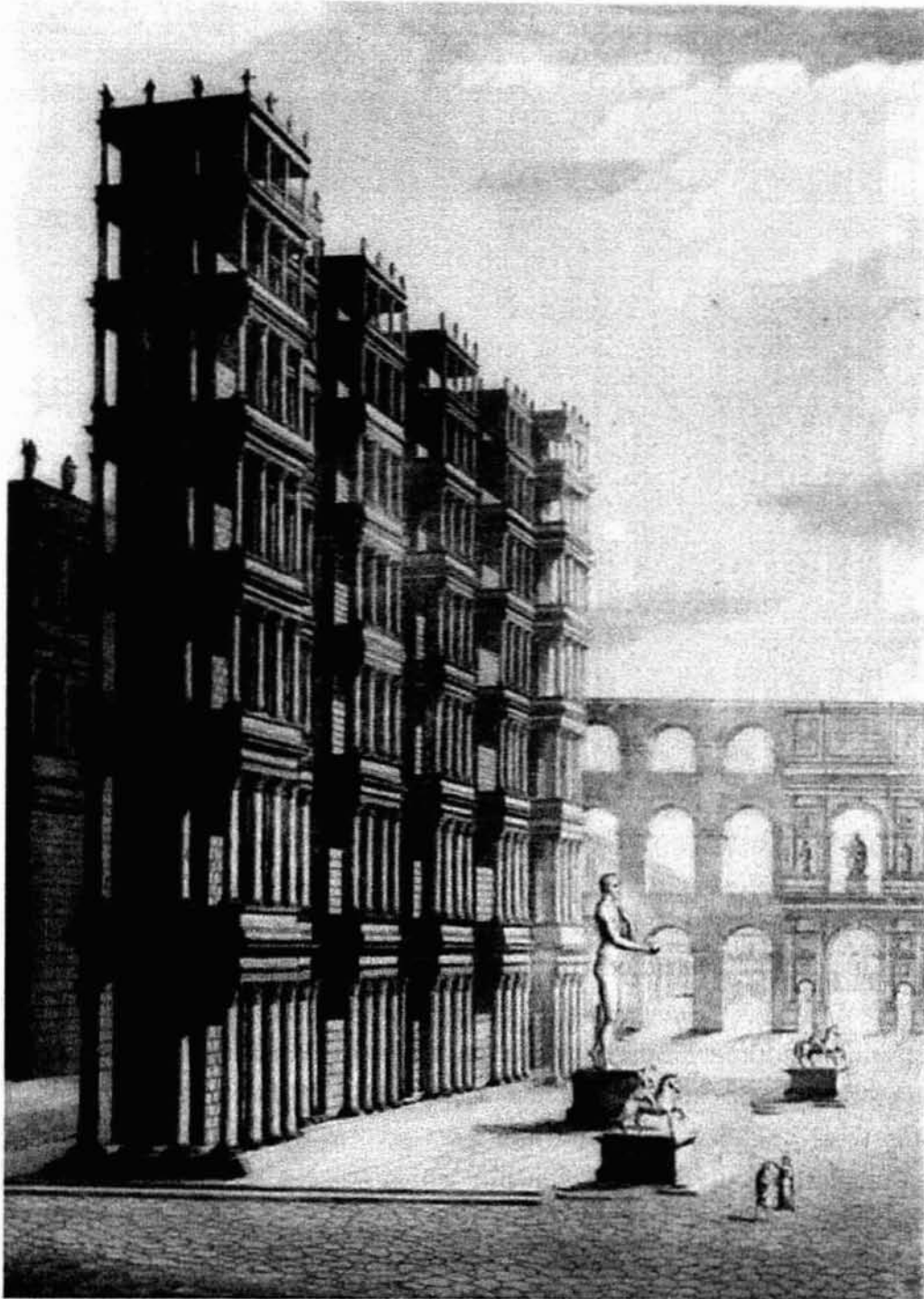
There are, however, other clues from the recent excavations and the monument's topographical history, which, when combined with a re-examination of the Marble Plan, produce an altogether different conclusion from that conventionally accepted. The remains of a porphyry water basin appear to offer confirmation, if any was needed, that at least part of the building had served as a fountain building, and the medieval form of the name 'Septem Solia' ('seven tubs') suggests that this continued to be a recognisable feature for some time after the period of classical antiquity. The toponym 'Sette Sale' later given to the cisterns, actually nine chambers, supplying the Baths of Trajan is an analogous formation, which is also medieval in origin.<sup>77</sup> The original appearance of the building can only be gauged from a comparison of the Renaissance drawings of the remains of the monument with the Marble Plan. A study of all the drawings available gives a clear indication

<sup>77</sup> Fine Licht (1990) 15.



(a)

15.14a, b, and c Reconstructions of the Septizodium at Rome: 14a and b front elevation and 14c view from the south side. Luigi Canina, *Gli edifizii di Roma antica*.



(b)

15.14a, b, and c (*cont.*)

of the appearance of the remnant that survived between c. 1500 – the date of the earliest drawing<sup>78</sup> – and 1588, when the structure was demolished. The structure consisted of a projecting bay of four columns: as the majority

<sup>78</sup> Verbogen (1982) 127 ('before 1510–20').



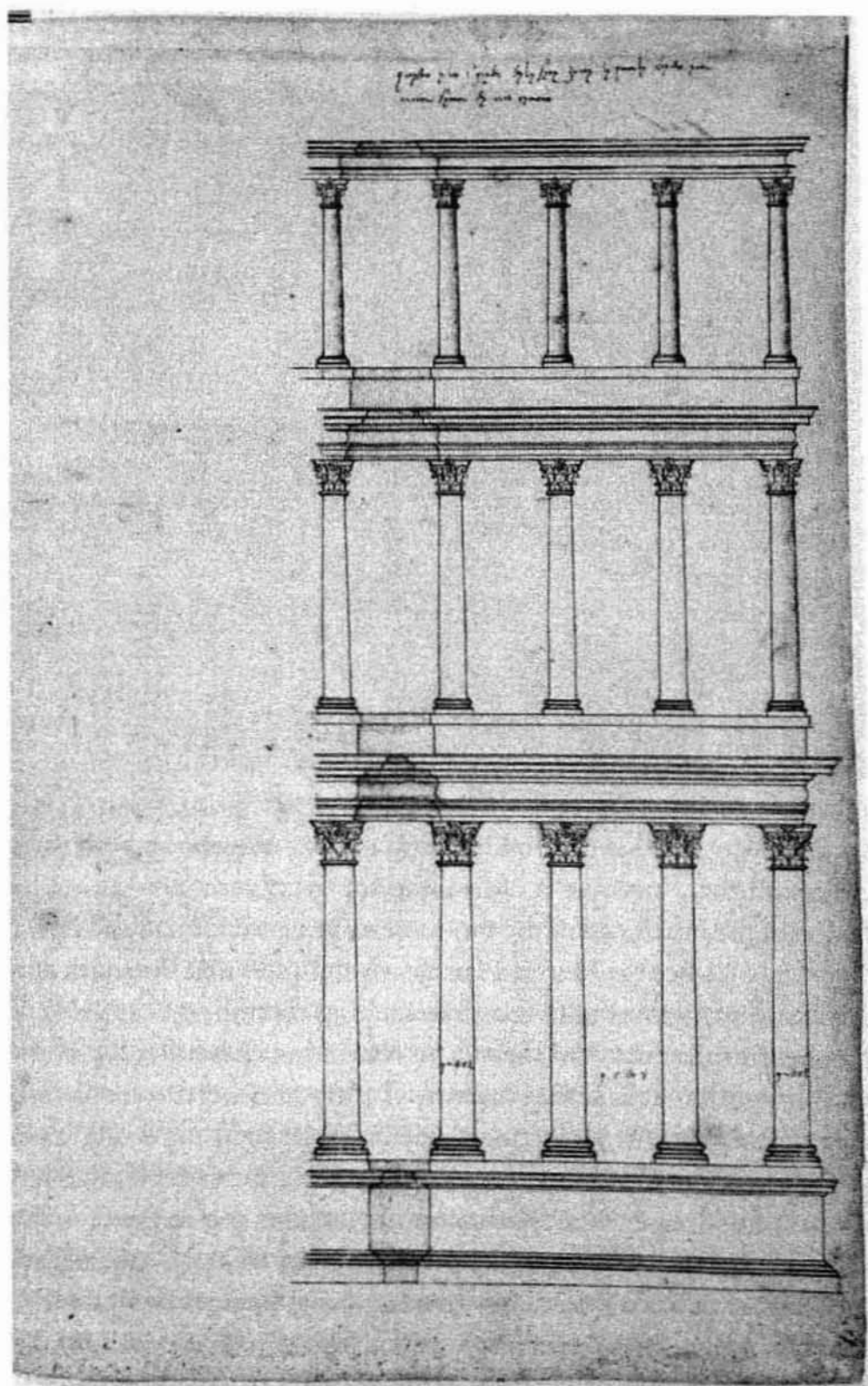




15.15 Bronze medallion of Septimius Severus from Hadrianopolis (Thrace), AD 193–211: reverse face depicting a fountain building with sculptural decoration.

an outer colonnade (fig. 15.19). The plan is even quadrupled by the artist of the *Codex Coner*, who provides an even more extravagant reconstruction, in which, however, the real core is still recognisable (fig. 15.20). What is clear from these drawings is that the building originally continued on both sides of the ruin and that, however it did so, the surviving remnant cannot be identified with the north end of the monument, as conventionally accepted (figs. 15.9–15.11), since the *Marble Plan* clearly indicates that the south end of the structure terminated with four freestanding columns on each side of the rectangular projection (and there is no reason to believe that the north end was different), whereas in the sixteenth-century ruin there were only two columns on one side of the projecting element. As the right angles shown in the drawing to either side of the projecting bay prevent this remnant from being identified with one of the four-column structures shown between the curved bays on the *Marble Plan*, it can only have come from the central part of the building, which is not shown on the surviving fragment of the plan.

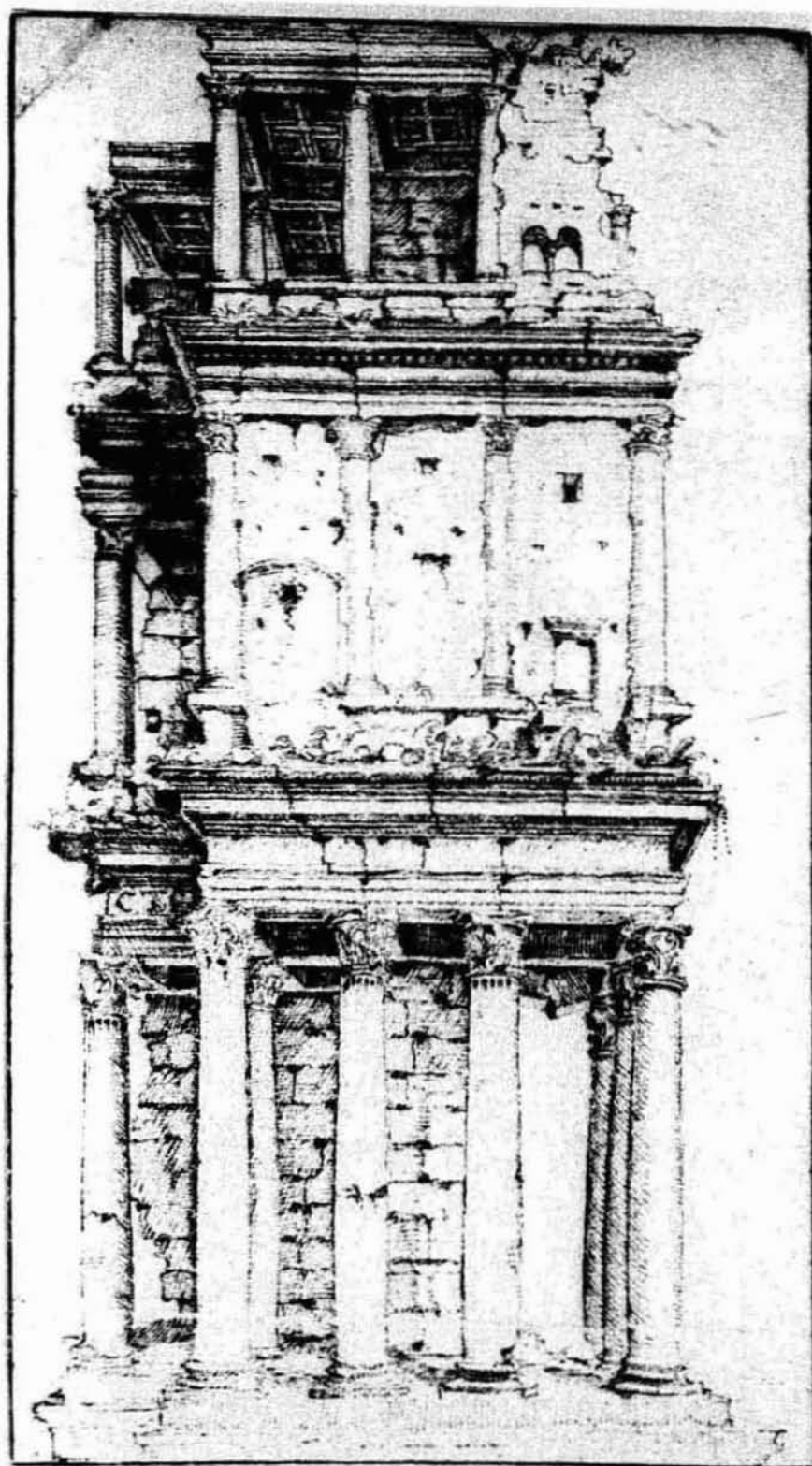
This conclusion has important implications for the interpretation of the form of the original *Septizodium*, which must therefore have been considerably longer than in the conventional reconstructions, an inference which is confirmed by a careful look at fragments 8a and 8b of the *Marble Plan*. Together these indicate that the building's inscribed name, which is fixed by the straight edge of fragment 8a and the join of fragment 8b to fragments 8e–g (fig. 15.2 = Trimble fig.), extended over a space that is quite disproportionate to the length of the structure given in the usual reconstructions.



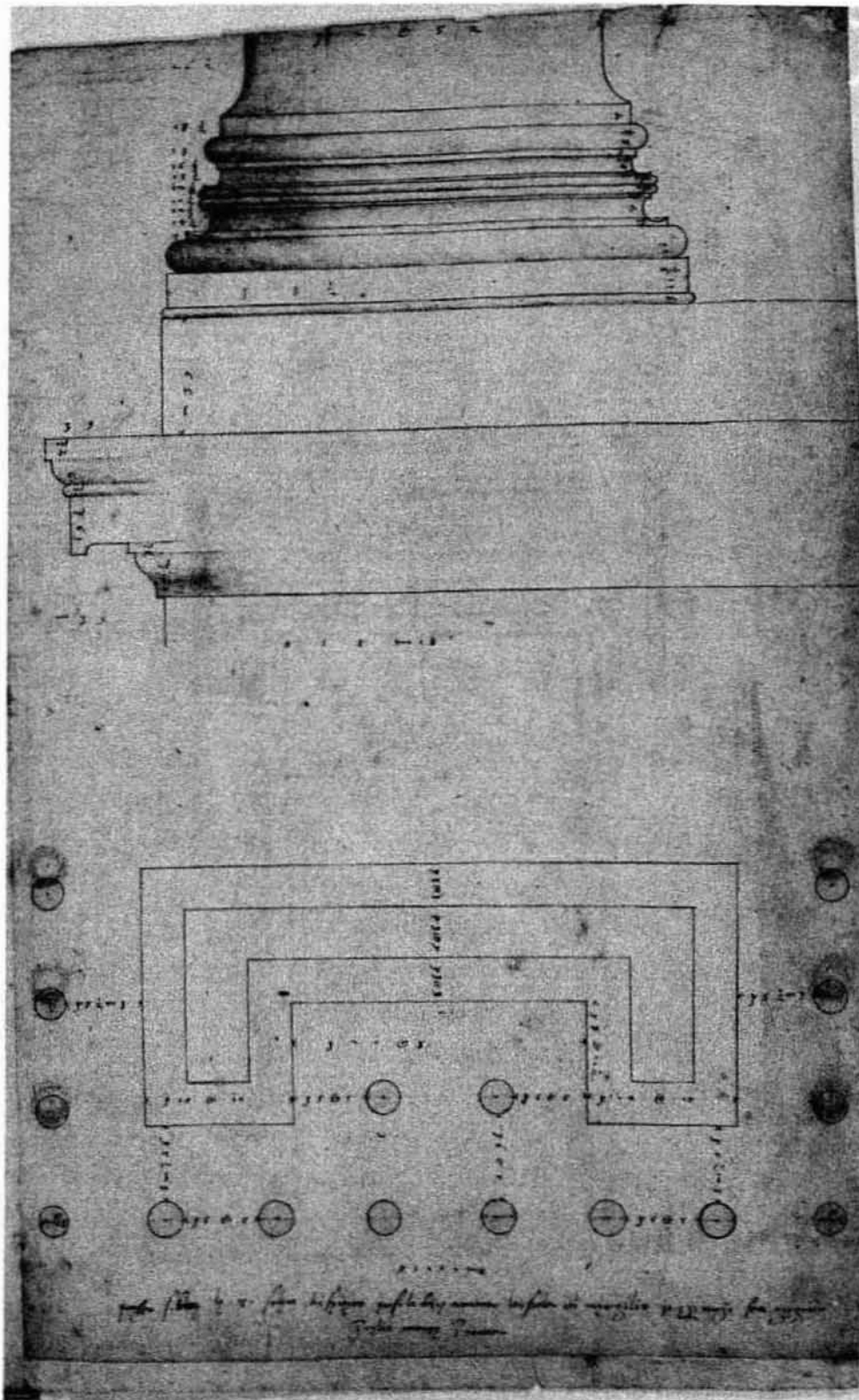
15.16 Restored view of the ruins of the Septizodium from the southeast.  
Andrea Palladio.



15.17 Ruins of the Septizodium from the east. M. van Heemskerck.

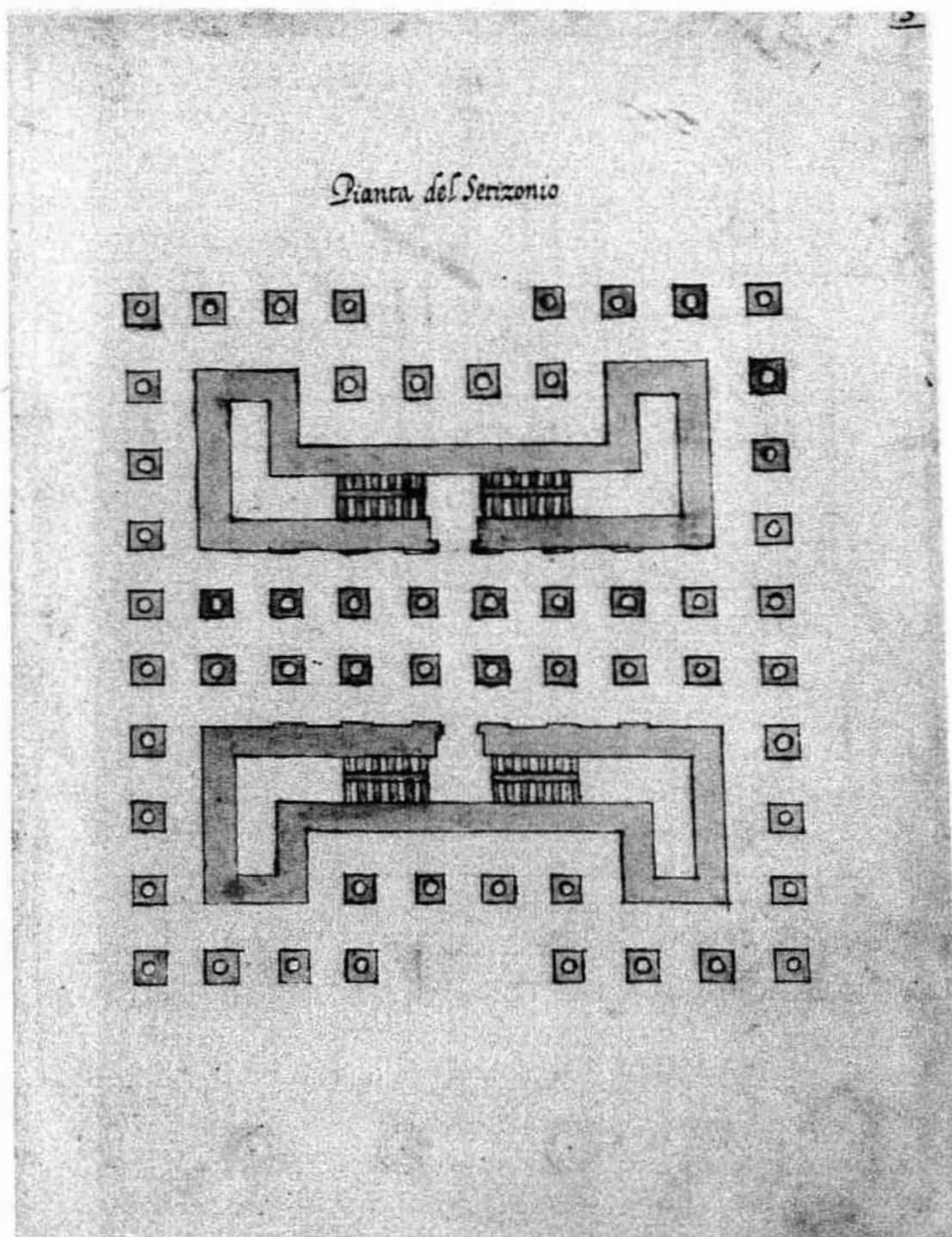


15.18 Ruins of the Septizodium from the east. M. van Heemskerck.



15.19 Restored plan of the lower storey of the Septizodium at Rome. Andrea Palladio.

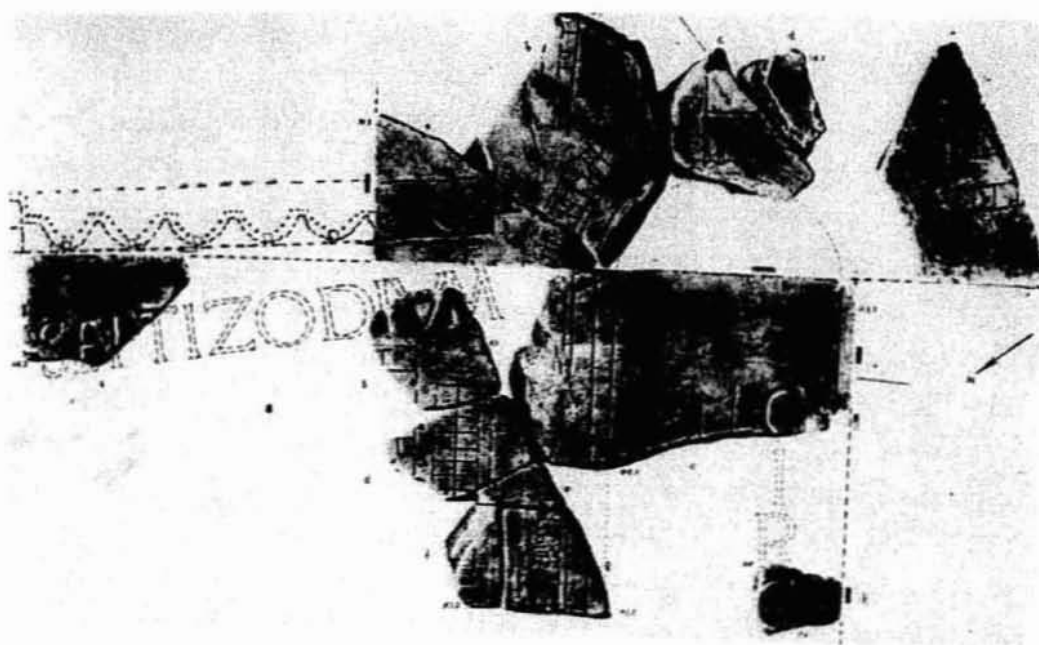




15.20 Restored plan of the Septizodium, Codex Coner, n.d., Sir John Soane's Museum, London.

By way of comparison, other inscriptions of building names on the Marble Plan show a clear conformity between the size and position of the lettering and the extent of the building.<sup>80</sup> This observation was already made, over

<sup>80</sup> Rodriguez-Almeida (1981) 30, 74–6 fig. 5, and pls. 5, 6. Cf., e.g., *[Th]ermae [Agrip]pae* on fr. 38, *Theatrum [Balb]i* on fr. 30a–b Stanford (= Carettoni, fr. 39a–b), *[Hecat]ostylum* on fr. 39a Stanford (= Carettoni, fr. 64a; cf. pl. 32), or *C[ircus Maximus]* on fr. 8c. For a list of inscriptions on the Marble Plan, see Valentini and Zucchetti (1940–53) vol. 1, 56–61.



15.21 Hypothetical reconstruction of the Septizodium as seen on the Forma Urbis Romae.

thirty years ago, by Salvatore Settis, who also showed that there was space on the plan for a total of seven rounded exedras, with the structure terminating just above the final letter of the word 'Septizodium' (fig. 15.21).<sup>81</sup> The resulting elongated structure has been challenged as 'rather improbable'.<sup>82</sup> Such a criticism is hardly sufficient to exclude it from consideration, especially as the attention given to the building in the *Historia Augusta* implies something exceptional, as does Ammianus Marcellinus' description of the monument as 'a nymphaeum of ambitious construction'; this language could hardly have been used of a fountain building such as the one conventionally restored, which is comparable to several that existed in the Roman East in Ammianus' time.<sup>83</sup> Indeed, the section of the frieze of the lower storey in d'Ollanda's drawing (fig. 15.7), which contained part of the titles of Caracalla, is unlikely to have been 'the final words' of the inscription.<sup>84</sup> The full text must surely have continued for some way further along the building. If each of the seven exedras had been equipped with porphyry basins of the type found in the excavations, the later name 'Septem Solia' – not to mention the assumption that the *Septem Solia Maior* and *Minor* added up to a *trivium* and *quadrivium* – would have been readily comprehensible. However, a more significant objection may be raised to Settis' reconstruction of a row of seven semicircular exedras, namely that, like the

<sup>81</sup> Settis (1973) 723–5 and fig. 21.

<sup>82</sup> Pisani Sartorio (1999).

<sup>83</sup> Amm. Marc. 15.7.3 (above, n. 29).

<sup>84</sup> As stated by Stevenson (1888) 271.



15.22 Detail of plan of Rome for the area around the Septizodium. R. Lanciani.

conventional reconstruction, it too leaves no room for the rectilinear form of the sixteenth-century ruin established above.

The length of the name inscribed on the Marble Plan would imply a building around 150 metres long. If this seems excessive, it is worth remembering the vast extent of the new wing that later sources called the *palatium Severi*, which covered 24,000 square metres and rose over 20 metres high;<sup>85</sup> structures of equally hyperbolic scale are attributed to other Severan emperors.<sup>86</sup> However, such a long monument would radically change our understanding of the whole area, so it is necessary to ensure that it is consistent with other topographical evidence (fig. 15.3) before a detailed alternative reconstruction can be proposed. A possible objection is that so long a structure would extend over the line of an ancient street shown in Lanciani's *Forma Urbis* as running between the Caelian and Palatine Hills on the line of the later Via di S. Gregorio (fig. 15.22).<sup>87</sup> In fact, the section of this street that was revealed in excavations under the corner of the convent of S. Gregorio would be some way to the east of this extended structure. Moreover, the whole area between the Palatine Hill and the part of the *Clivus Scauri* that has been identified

<sup>85</sup> Papi (1999a) 32. <sup>86</sup> HA, *Elag.* 20; *Alex. Sev.* 20. Cf. *plateae Antoninianae*.

<sup>87</sup> Colini (1944) 199; Gorrie (2001) 664. See Lanciani (1893–1901) pl. 35.

on the disconnected fragment 42 of the Marble Plan, is clear of structures, a point made strongly by the most recent students of this building.<sup>88</sup> In fact, there is nothing in the existing topographical evidence for this area of Rome that would prevent such a reconstruction.

On the other hand, there are two features of the topography that would be rather better explained by an elongated Septizodium than by the conventional reconstruction. First, it is explicitly attested in the medieval *Mirabilia* that after the *Clivus Scauri*, which sloped down westwards from the Caelian Hill, the visitor arrived 'in front of (*ante*) the *Septem Solium*'.<sup>89</sup> Such a statement does not easily fit the location of the Septizodium as usually conceived, which is some way to the southwest; by contrast, if the Septizodium had extended to a position opposite the letter 'S' of the Marble Plan, it could very naturally be understood as being directly 'in front of the *Clivus Scauri*'. The second observation relates to the statement in the *Augustan History* that the building was intended to serve as an atrium providing an approach to the Palatine Hill.<sup>90</sup> Certainly, as the structure is usually conceived, it is hard to make sense of this claim, even regardless of its being used as a fountain, since the hill would have risen very steeply behind it.<sup>91</sup> If, however, the Septizodium had extended further to the north, the central part of the building might have been situated directly in front of the ancient road that rises alongside the Severan substructures and is marked on Lanciani's plan as *cryptae ante portam monasterii sub Palatio maiori*. There remains the difficulty that, as a fountain with a water basin in front of it, the building could not have been an entrance. However, the earlier observation about the form of the ruin existing in the sixteenth century permits a different understanding of the central part. This remnant might be interpreted as a rectangular structure that originally stood on the southern side of a central atrium area, which had three semicircular exedras on either side and, without the statue of Severus allegedly placed there by the urban prefect, would have led directly to the ramp ascending northwards towards the imperial palace (cf. fig. 15.22). This story may seem as unbelievable as Dio's anecdote about the Temple of Venus and Rome which introduced this chapter, but the reconstruction suggested here at least provides an architectural context for how the story came about. The central open, colonnaded area could certainly have been described as a 'royal atrium'<sup>92</sup> and the whole building

<sup>88</sup> Carettoni et al. (1960) 111; Gorrie (2001) 666; Lusnia (2004) 541.

<sup>89</sup> *Mirabilia* 8 in Valentini and Zucchetti (1940–53) vol. III, 24.

<sup>90</sup> *HA*, Sev. 24.3 (cited at n. 23 above). <sup>91</sup> Guey (1946) 149; Gorrie (2001) 657.

<sup>92</sup> For *atrium* of a colonnade around an open court, cf. Vitruvius *De arch.* 6.3.1; cf., e.g., the Atrium Vestae in the Roman Forum.



thus interpreted as potentially providing an entrance to the new wing of the imperial palace, with fountains to either side. After the installation of the statue at the focal point of this 'atrium', the entrance from the Circus Maximus side was used instead.

Consideration of the function of the Septizodium also helps to elucidate the regionalist accent of the *Historia Augusta*. The clearest guide to the nature of this institution is the third-century African poet Commodianus, who lists a pantheon of planetary divinities under the heading 'Septizodium'.<sup>93</sup> The only other comparable literary attestation is the puzzling statement of Suetonius that Titus was born 'in a dirty house near the Septizonium (*sic*)'.<sup>94</sup> Nothing else is known of such a building, but, given 'the very insecure foundation' on which the text of Suetonius' *Lives of the Caesars* is based,<sup>95</sup> and the likelihood that at least one branch of the manuscripts that preserve it suffers from substantial contamination,<sup>96</sup> it may be appropriate to adopt a healthy scepticism about this reading.<sup>97</sup> As for the epigraphic material, it is striking that the term *Septizodium* or *Septizonium* is found, with one exception, only in North Africa and that all or almost all attested uses of the word belong to the Severan period. In only three cases, at Lambaesis in Algeria and Henschir Bedd and Henschir Tounga (ancient Cincari) in northern Tunisia, is there any evidence for what it looked like.<sup>98</sup> The fully excavated structure at Cincari (fig. 15.23), which comprised seven round niches, has been dated to the second half of the second century, in which case it would have antedated the Septizodium in Rome.<sup>99</sup> The version at Lambaesis was a fountain, to the rear of which was apparently a distribution point for the aqueducts supplying the ancient town.<sup>100</sup> Its façade on the Via Septimiana also had seven niches; of which the central niche was rather wider than the rest and contained a statue within a baldachin-like structure (fig. 15.24).<sup>101</sup> A study of the building's inscriptions may suggest that, when the building was first constructed in 226, it was called a *nymphaeum* and that the name 'Septizonium' was only applied upon its restoration by the provincial governor Marcus Aurelius Cominius Cassianus in 246–8.<sup>102</sup> The most

<sup>93</sup> Commodianus, *Instructions in Favour of Christian Discipline. Against the Gods of the Heathens*, 1.7: 'Of the Septizonium and the Stars'.

<sup>94</sup> Suet. *Tit.* 1. <sup>95</sup> Smith (1901) 19.

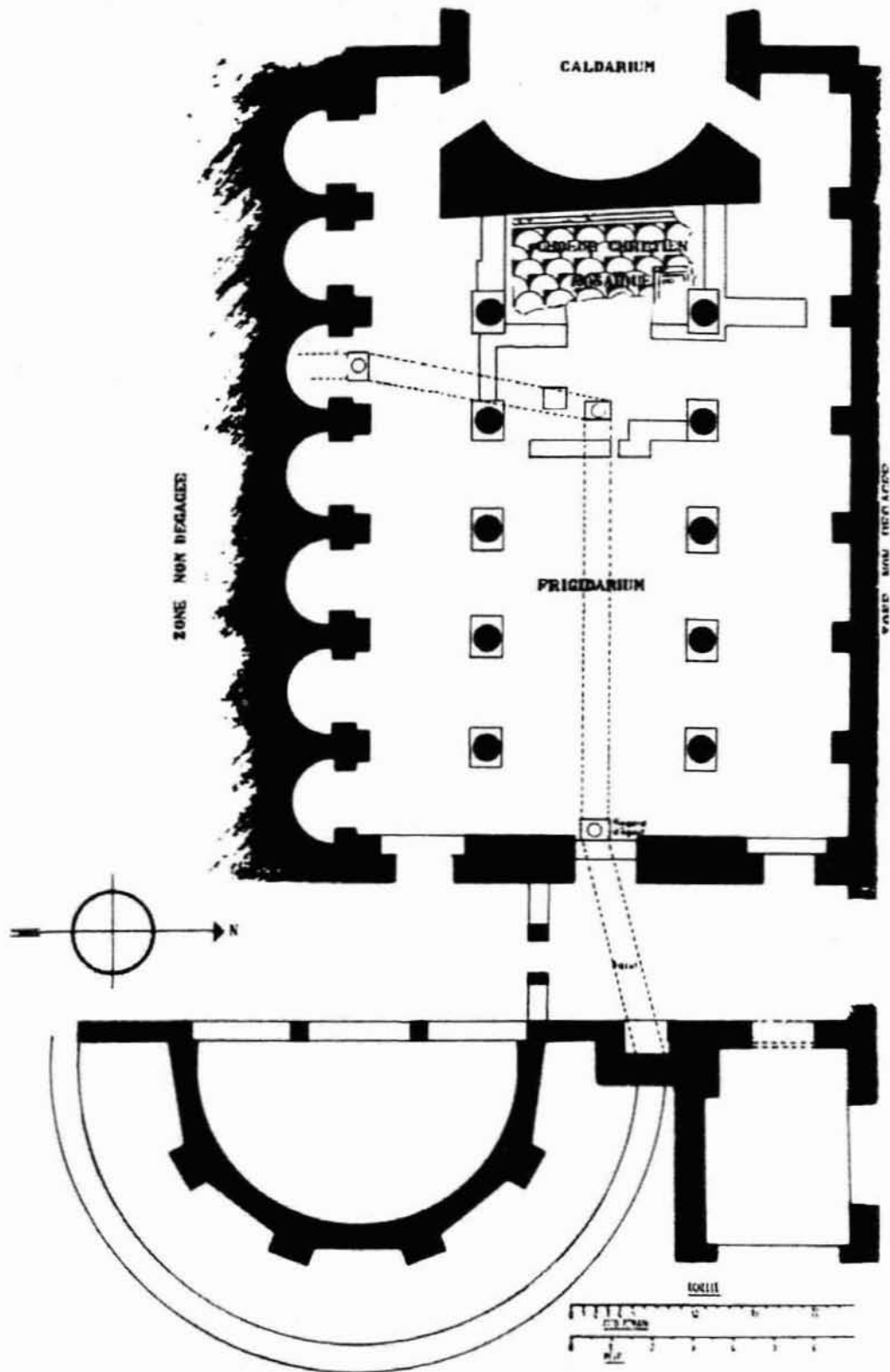
<sup>96</sup> For the less reliable 'Z' branch, see Bridge (1930) 183–4; Tibbetts (1983) 401.

<sup>97</sup> For what it is worth, the phrase 'p(ro)pe septizonium' appears clearly in the Durham Manuscript belonging to the 'Z' branch (Durham Cathedral Library, C.111.18), written in the later eleventh century; cf. Rud (1825) 291.

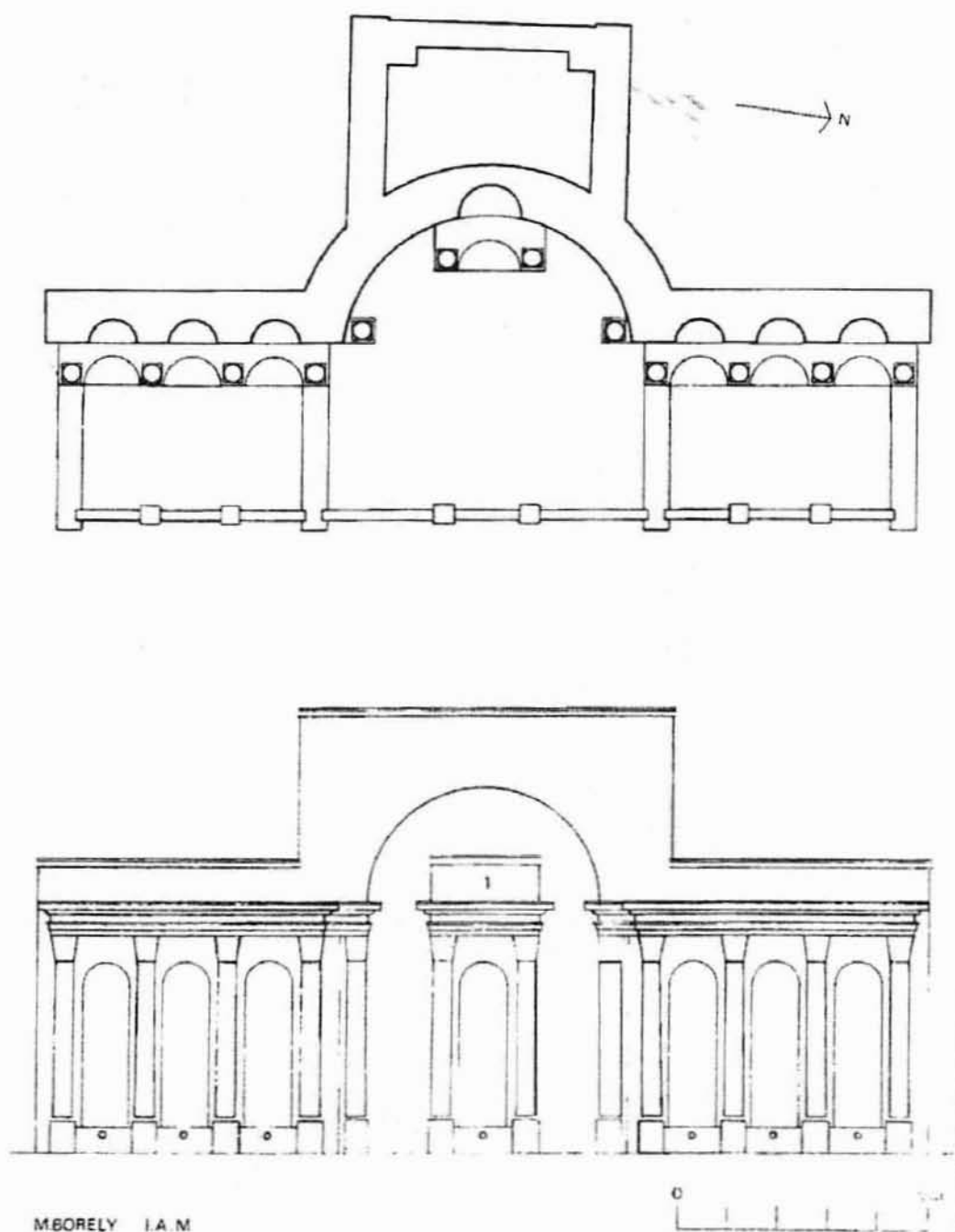
<sup>98</sup> Picard (1962a) 85–9; Janon (1973) 222–41; Aupert (1974) 95–81. <sup>99</sup> Picard (1962a) 85–9.

<sup>100</sup> Janon (1973) 234–5. <sup>101</sup> Janon (1973) 229–31, 237.

<sup>102</sup> *CIL* 8.2657 = *ILS* 5626 (rebuilding); *CIL* 8.2658 (original inscription); Thomas and Witschel (1992) 166–7.



15.23 Provisional plan of the Septizonium at Henschir Touna (ancient Cincari), early third century AD. After Picard (1962) 80 fig. 15.1.



15.24 Reconstructed plan and elevation of the Septizonium at Lambaesis, AD 226. From Janon (1973).

recent study of this building rejects the possibility that it might itself have been a model for other buildings so named.<sup>103</sup> On the other hand, it may have drawn its own inspiration from the building at Rome. Intriguingly, of the only two statues found in the vicinity of the structure, one is believed to have been a personification of Africa; identifiable by the distinctive elephant proboscis, the head has been noted for its resemblance to the reliefs of the

<sup>103</sup> Janon (1973) 240.



15.25 Fragment of sculpture probably representing a reclining river deity and a feline creature, found in 1986 in excavations of an exedra of the Septizodium at Rome.

Hadrianeum at Rome, indicating perhaps a metropolitan conception.<sup>104</sup> It was apparently found in one of the three cellae of a temple facing the Septizonium across the Via Septimiana, which is accordingly identified as 'a sanctuary dedicated to Africa', though it has also been linked with a headless statue in the Septizodium.<sup>105</sup> Might such a figure have existed in the metropolitan model, emphasising its regional identity?

The only item of sculpture found in the recent excavations is a fragment of a reclining figure, which has been interpreted as a river god. If this is right, the river may well be the Nile, the most heralded river of the African continent, with the paw of an undoubtedly feline creature beside it (fig. 15.25).<sup>106</sup> At first sight, this animal appears to be a lion, but lions are rarely associated with images of the Nile.<sup>107</sup> More imaginatively, one might suppose the creature to be a *κ(ο)ροκόττας*, a hyena-like animal, which occurs in association with the river on the Nilotic mosaic at Palestrina: reported among the Aethiopians (as well as in modern India), it shows similarities to hyaenas in present-day

<sup>104</sup> Leglay (1966) 1233–9; Janon (1973) 235–6; Salciedo (1996) 95–6, cat. no. 105, pl. 34A: 26 cm wide by 30 cm high.

<sup>105</sup> Temple: Salciedo (1996), 96; Septizodium: Leglay (1966) 1238.

<sup>106</sup> Iacopi and Tedone (1993) fig. 4. <sup>107</sup> Jentel (1987) and Ostrowski (1991).





15.26 Bronze medallion of Antoninus Pius, AD 160: reverse face, showing a personified statue of Africa.

Kenya.<sup>108</sup> As a specimen of this animal was supposedly brought to Rome for the first time for the games of 202, there were good reasons for it to be displayed in the Septizodium of 203.<sup>109</sup> Others, however, have seen the animal from the Septizodium excavations as a tiger, a visual pun for the Parthian Tigris, and with so little preserved it is impossible to be certain.<sup>110</sup> But it is by no means certain that the reclining figure represents a river. A comparison with a figure on a medal of Antoninus Pius dated to 160, with elephant proboscis and a lion beside it, suggests that it could well be a personification of Africa (fig. 15.26).<sup>111</sup>

The single exception to such epigraphic *septizodia* being an exclusively African phenomenon is a revealing instance from the formerly Punic Lilybaeum (now Marsala) in western Sicily, which has been called 'the natural bridge between Rome and Africa'.<sup>112</sup> In 189–90 Severus had been governor of Sicily, like his elder brother before him, so it is a plausible hypothesis that the name of the *vicus septizodi* there, repaved in the first half of the third century to complete a larger architectural scheme that had apparently been interrupted, reflected the desire to cultivate a connection with the emperor and his family, who are well attested in honorific inscriptions from

<sup>108</sup> Palestrina: IG 14.1302b; Agatharchides fr. 77, in Huntingford (1980) 192, cf. *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* 50 in Huntingford (1980) 49, 70; Pliny, *HN* 8.72, 107.

<sup>109</sup> Birley (1988) 144. <sup>110</sup> Lusnia (2004) 522–3; cf. Diez (1983); Weiss (1988) 144.

<sup>111</sup> Gnechi (1912) vol. II, 11–12 no. 23, pl. 47.

<sup>112</sup> *AE* 1964.182 = Barbieri (1961) 34–45; cf. Wilson (1988) 165; Di Stefano (1984) and (1993). The quotation is from Belvedere (1988) 393.

the town.<sup>113</sup> Overall, the evidence suggests that in the Severan period, if not earlier, a clear notion of a *septizodium* was held in North Africa, which may be contrasted with the absence of such a notion from other regions of the empire, excluding, of course, Severus' Rome.

The building at Rome, therefore, would have combined the essential plan of a *septizodium*, a name of distinctly planetary associations, which consisted in this case of seven niches, the outer four of semicircular form and the inner three rectangular. The building's architectural embellishment resembled a *scaenae frons*, as at Sabratha (fig. 15.12) and Lepcis. Its dedication occurred fittingly in 203, perhaps in the spring of that year, upon Severus' return from his 'most fortunate expedition' (*expeditio felicissima*) to Africa,<sup>114</sup> where he had apparently just inaugurated a large temple to the Punic gods Melqarth and Shadrappa at the head of the new Forum at his home city of Lepcis Magna.<sup>115</sup> On his last visit he had marked his tenth anniversary (*decennalia*) by dedicating a restoration of Hadrian's Pantheon in the Campus Martius with full cultic ornament and its name for the first time emphatically inscribed on its façade. Now he himself entered the city 'as if celebrating an ovation',<sup>116</sup> the first 'visitor from Africa', it seems, to be greeted by the new Septizodium, an 'African' version of a planetary structure. He then proceeded, as if celebrating a triumph, down the Via Triumphalis, on which the building lay,<sup>117</sup> possibly passing a colossal statue of himself, strategically placed to meet the visitor before Nero's colossus that had been moved under Hadrian.<sup>118</sup> After reaching the Via Sacra, he arrived at the new arch in the Roman Forum, which commemorated his earlier Parthian victories.

The Septizodium's avowed purpose was further demonstrated the following year, in 204, when visitors from all over Italy and probably further afield, including Africa, were summoned to attend the seventh holding of the Secular Games.<sup>119</sup> What survives of the traditional hymn sung on this occasion, the *carmen saeculare*, suggests that the prayers were modified to incorporate Severus' 'African' gods of Hercules (Melqarth) and Bacchus/Liber (Shadrappa).<sup>120</sup> The location of the Septizodium was certainly well chosen. Besides its position as an entrance to the Palatine and on the route of the Via Triumphalis, it directly faced the Porta Capena, as a newly discovered

<sup>113</sup> Barbieri (1961) 34–45; Belvedere (1988) 393–4.

<sup>114</sup> Cf. Birley (1988) 155.

<sup>115</sup> Ward-Perkins (1993) 53.

<sup>116</sup> *HA*, Sev. 14.7.

<sup>117</sup> Makin (1921) 35; Coarelli (1988) 365.

<sup>118</sup> *Notitiae Breviarium* ('colossi II') in Jordan and Hülsen (1871–1907) vol. II, 43; cf. Dombart (1922) 120; Platner and Ashby (1929) 474.

<sup>119</sup> Herodian 3.8.10; Gorrie (2001) 669.

<sup>120</sup> Pigghi (1965) 96–9; cf. Birley (1988) 159.



15.27 Reconstruction of the Porta Capena, situated within the 'Servian Wall' and straddled by the Aqua Appia. John Henry Parker.

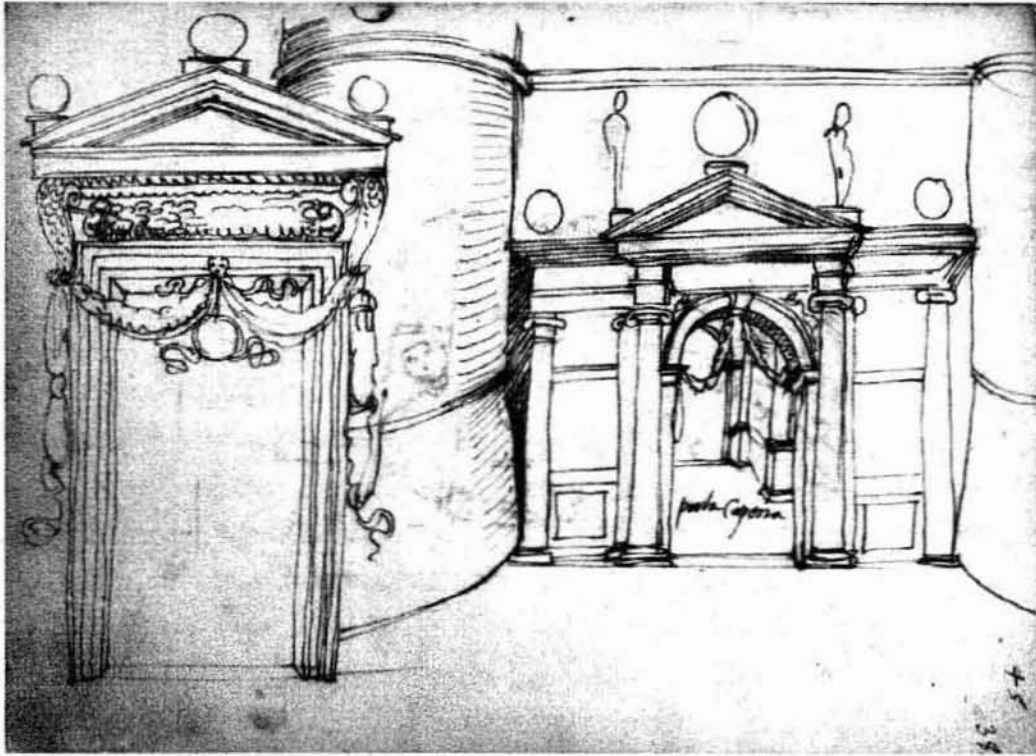
drawing by John Henry Parker makes plain (fig. 15.27).<sup>121</sup> Between it and the gate was a vast empty area, well suited to the congregation of immigrants to the city.<sup>122</sup> According to one recent suggestion, this area was redeveloped around this period to meet the 'new road' (Via Nova), almost thirty metres wide, leading to the Septizodium from the new Severan Baths, and perhaps extended by Caracalla to his own baths, and meeting the Via Appia at the Porta Capena.<sup>123</sup> To those who reached the Gate from North Africa, the new 'sacred city'<sup>124</sup> of Rome had a familiar look, as far as they could tell from this monument that stared them in the face on their arrival inside the Porta Capena. The Septizodium was recognisably 'African', not only in its very name and its form of seven exedras in sequence, but even in the material of its decoration, which included columns of *giallo antico* marble from the quarries at Chemtou, in addition to those of red granite, cipollino, verde antico, porphyry, and various white marbles.<sup>125</sup>

<sup>121</sup> Sténuît (2003) 33 fig. 3; cf. also the model of Rome by Paul Bigot (1870–1942) in the Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire in Brussels (Sténuît (2003) fig. 1).

<sup>122</sup> Gorrie (2001) 664; Lusnia (2004) 535.

<sup>123</sup> *Forma Urbis* frs. 1a–e; cf. Colini in Carettoni et al. (1960) 59–60; Gorrie (2001) 667–8; Lusnia (2004) 535.

<sup>124</sup> Desnier (1993). <sup>125</sup> Stevenson (1888) 290.



15.28 Design for the decoration of 'Porta Capena' (actually Porta S. Paolo), Rome, with ornamental dressing for the triumph of Emperor Charles V in 1535.

There is one further sense in which the building's form and location had an African connection. In 191 BC Scipio Africanus, before setting out to join his brother Lucius in the war against Antiochus IV, had dedicated a triumphal arch on the Capitol with two marble basins in front of the arch.<sup>126</sup> Scipio's family tomb was just outside the Porta Capena in an area that was now to be associated with Severus' own *gens Septimia*: on the right of the Via Appia, a tomb of Severus' son Geta, 'after the model of a septicodium' (or 'the Septizodium'),<sup>127</sup> and a little further from Rome the great baths of Severus' other son, Caracalla: the *natatio* of that bath had a similar theatre-like appearance to the Septizodium itself. Dio's omission of these substantial structures from the pages of his *History* can perhaps be explained by a desire to play down the emperor's African origins.<sup>128</sup>

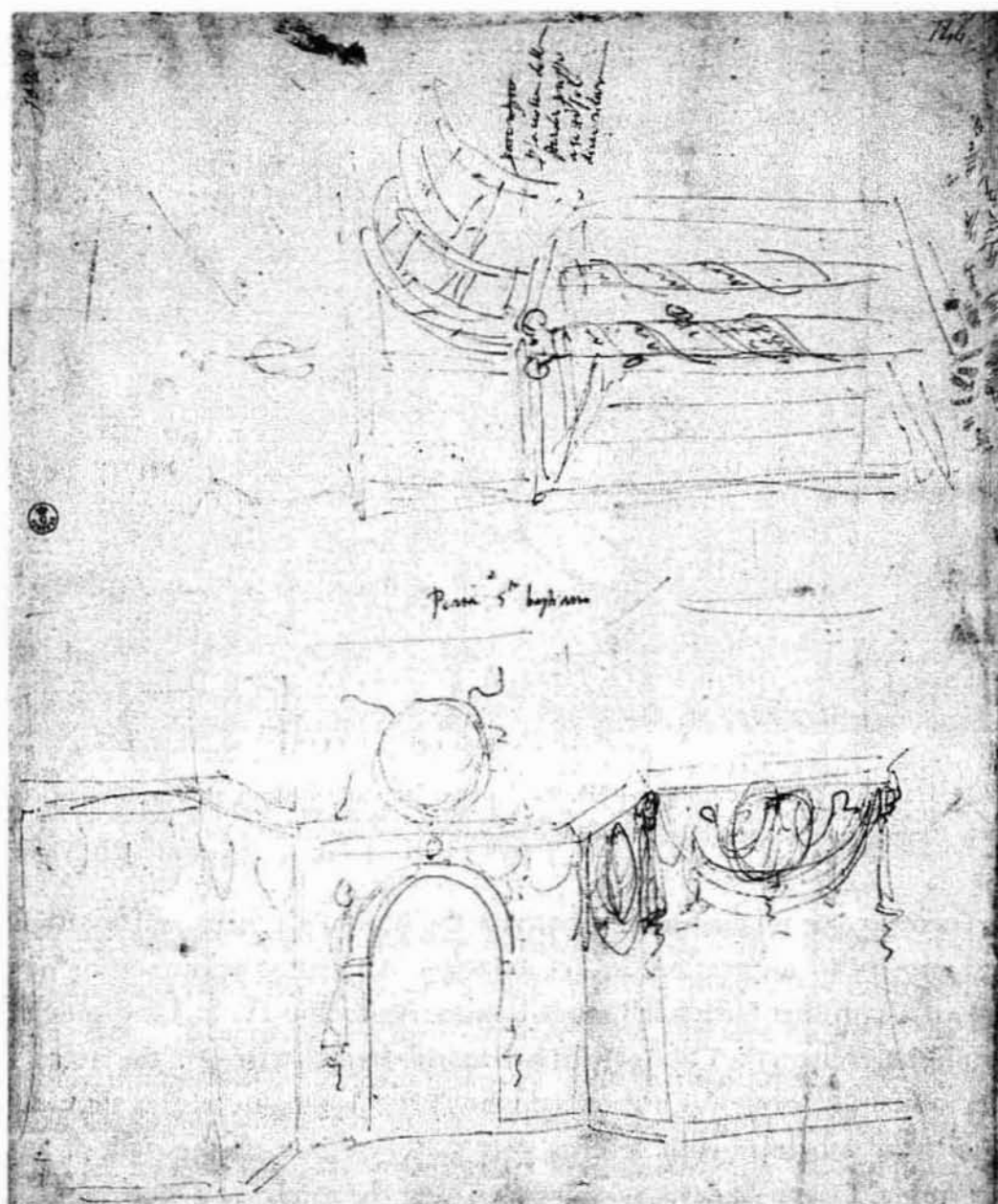
Roman buildings were nothing if not monuments of history, and a further historical reference helps to explain the significance of this area as an entrance to Rome. In 210 BC, the Roman general Marcellus had arrived at the Porta Capena with booty from his conquest of Syracuse. Livy observes how heads shook at the time in wonderment at how Marcellus could so shamefully pour scorn on the city that had once been an ally of Rome's. They imagined

<sup>126</sup> Spani (1951).

<sup>127</sup> HA, *Geta* 7.

<sup>128</sup> Cf. Birley (1988) 151.





15.29 Designs by Antonio da Sangallo the younger for the triumph of Emperor Charles V in 1535 in Rome: (below) a project for the decoration of Porta S. Sebastiano, and (above) a project for a temporary triumphal arch near the Septizodium, situated at the crossroads between Via di Porta S. Sebastiano and Via di S. Gregorio, Rome.

what King Hiero of Sicily might have thought, had he been alive to see in Marcellus' new Temple of Honour and Virtue beside the Porta Capena, 'the spoils of his country, *in the vestibule of the city*, almost on the gate'.<sup>129</sup> It may be assumed that Severus knew his history. A dedication to the co-emperors Severus and Caracalla dated to 205 records that a 'shrine of Honour and

<sup>129</sup> Livy 26.32.4.

Virtue' (*aedicula Honoris et Virtutis*) had been restored;<sup>130</sup> one wonders whether this had also been done for the events of 203–4.

A closing image serves to show how the Septizodium's regionalist associations lingered, even in its final years. On 5 April 1536, shortly after Heemskerck drew his views, the Holy Roman Emperor, the Habsburg Charles V, entered Rome, to celebrate his capture of Tunis in August 1535.<sup>131</sup> We know of the triumphal architecture erected for his entry to the city. Starting at the church of S. Paolo fuori le mura, the lengthy procession followed the Via Ostiense to Porta San Paolo, which was suitably decked with triumphal ornamentation (fig. 15.28); it then took a circuitous route eastwards along the Via delle Sette Chiese via the church of Quo Vadis to the Porta S. Sebastiano, thus following the new triumphal route designed by the humanist Latino Giovenale Manetti (1486–1553), 'commissioner for antiquities' for Pope Paul III, to emphasise the role of the papacy, as part of the new Rome regenerated after the sack of 1527; the same route was used thirty-five years later by Marcantonio Colonna after the Battle of Lepanto.<sup>132</sup> Drawings by Antonio da Sangallo the Younger show that further temporary, triumphal displays welcomed the emperor within the city. The Porta S. Sebastiano itself, where Charles entered Rome from the Via Appia, was adorned with a large medallion in the attic over the barrel vault and two other medallions in each of the two towers (fig. 15.29, below), as well as paintings by Battista Franco and Ermanno Fiammingo and sculptures by Lorenzo and Raffaello da Montelupo and other artists working under Sangallo's direction. Then, a few hundred paces further into the city along a street widened for the occasion, there was a second arch, intended '[p]er la volta della Strada presso a Sette Soli' (fig. 15.29, above).<sup>133</sup> This arch, crowned by four statues with spirals of greenery, stood at the entrance to the main road to S. Gregorio near the Settizonio ('Sette Soli').<sup>134</sup> As the emperor processed towards the Arch of Constantine (cf. fig. 15.14a), he might have cast a glance to his left at the forlorn remains of this earlier emblem of Africa.

<sup>130</sup> AE 1946 no. 189. <sup>131</sup> Lanciani (1902–12) vol. II, 63; Madonna (1980).

<sup>132</sup> Madonna (1980) 66; Antinori (1989) 56 and 61 n. 8; Quattrocchi (2003).

<sup>133</sup> Madonna (1980) fig. 65.

<sup>134</sup> Uffizi 1014a r, with description by Marcello Fagiolo and Gabriele Morolli in Adams (1994) 181.